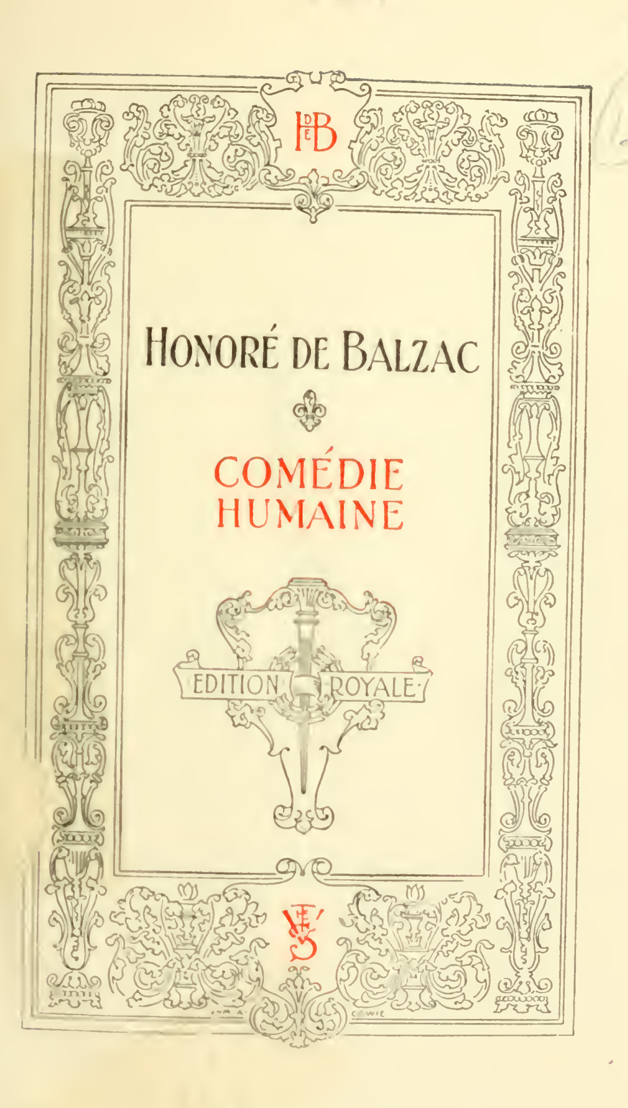
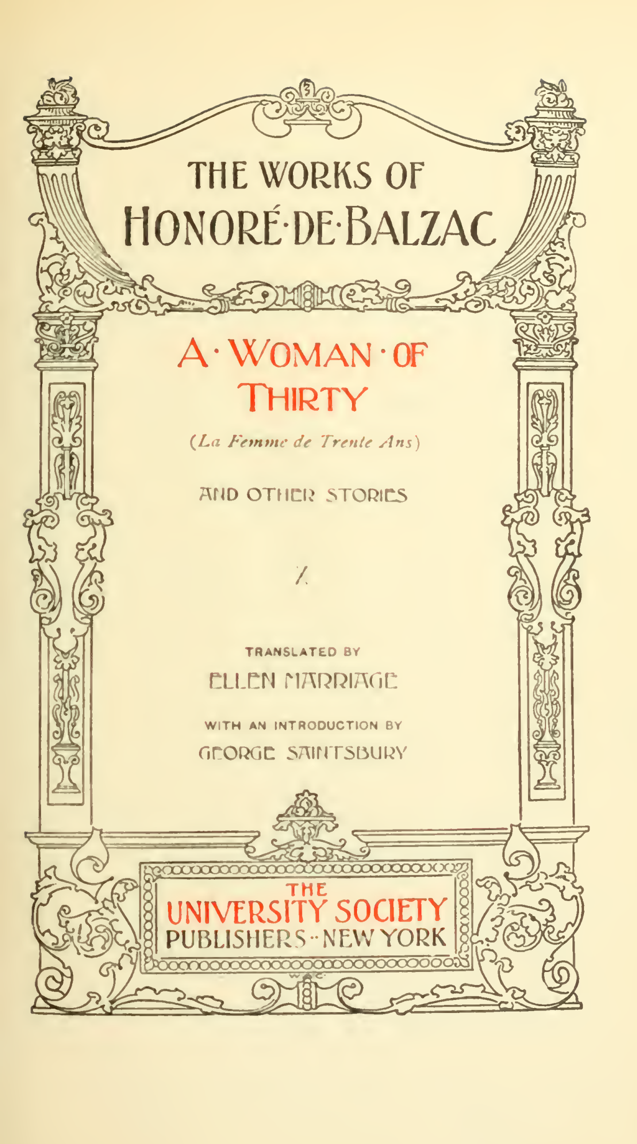

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HONORÉ DE BALZAC
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THE WORKS OF
HONORÉ·DE·BALZAC
A·WOMAN·OF
THIRTY
(La Femme de Trente Ans)
AND OTHER STORIES
TRANSLATED BY
ELLEN MARRIAGE
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
GEORGE SAINTSBURY
THE
UNIVERSITY SOCIETY
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AND OTHER STORIES

INTRODUCTION

There are not a few volumes of Balzac of which it is possible to speak with more editorial enthusiasm, perhaps indeed there is hardly any of which it is possible to speak with less, than of the volume which opens with *La Femme de Trente Ans.* All its contents, or all with the exception of *Gobseck,* are tainted with a kind of sentimentalism which, in Balzac's hands and to English taste, very rarely escapes a smatch of the rancid; few of them exhibit him at his best as an artist, and one or two show him almost at his worst.

The least good of all—though its title and a very small part of its contents have had the honor to meet with an approval from Sainte-Beuve, which that critic did not always bestow upon Balzac's work—is the first or title-story. As M. de Lovenjoul's patient investigations have shown, and as the curiously wide date 1828-1844 would itself indicate to any one who has carefully studied Balzac's ways of proceeding, it is not really a single story at all, but consists of half a dozen chapters or episodes originally published at different times and in different places, and stuck together with so much less than even the author's usual attention to strict construction, that the general title is totally inapplicable to the greater part of the book, and that the chronology of that part to which it does apply fits in very badly with the rest. This, however, is the least of the faults of the piece. It is more—though still not most—serious that Balzac never seems to have made up anything like a clear or consistent idea of

Julie d'Aiglemont in his mind. First she is a selfish and thoughtless child; then an angelic and persecuted but faithful wife; then a somewhat facile victim to a very commonplace seducer, after resisting an exceptional one. So, again, she is first a devoted mother, then an almost unnatural parent, and then again devoted, being punished *par où elle a pêché* once more. Even this, however, might have been atoned for by truth, or grace, or power of handling. I cannot find much of any of these things here. Not to mention the unsavoriness of part of Julie's trials, they are not such as, in me at least, excite any sympathy; and Balzac has drenched her with the sickly sentiment above noticed to an almost nauseous extent. Although he would have us take the Marquis as a brutal husband, he does not in effect represent him as such, but merely as a not very refined and rather clumsy "good fellow," who for his sins is cursed with a *mijaurée* of a wife. The Julie-Arthur love-passages are in the very worst style of "sensibility;" and though I fully acknowledge the heroism of my countryman Lord Arthur in allowing his fingers to be crushed and making no sign—although I question very much whether I could have done the same—I fear this romantic act does not suffice to give verisimilitude to a figure which is for the most part mere pasteboard, with sawdust inside and tinsel out. Many of the incidents, such as the pushing of the child into the water, and, still more, the scene on shipboard where the princely Corsair takes millions out of a piano and gives them away, have the crude and childish absurdity of the *Œuvres de Jeunesse,* which they very much resemble, and with which, from the earliest date given, they may very probably have been contemporary. Those who are fortunate enough to find Julie, in her early afternoon of *femme incomprise,* attractive, may put up with

these defects. I own that I am not quite able to find the compensation sufficient. The worse side of the French "sensibility" school from Rousseau to Madame de Staël appears here; and Balzac, genius as he was, had quite weak points enough of his own without borrowing other men's and women's.

La Femme Abandonnée, with its two successors, rather belongs to that class of Balzac's stories to which I have elsewhere given the title of anecdotes. It is better than the title-story, or rather it has fewer and less variable faults. The first meeting of Madame de Beauséant and M. de Nueil is positively good; and the introduction, with its sketch of what Balzac knew or dreamed to be society, has the merit of most of his overtures. But the tale as a whole has the drawback of almost all this special class of love-stories, except *Adolphe* —from which so many of them were imitated, and which Balzac, I think, generally had in his mind when he attempted the style. Benjamin Constant, either by sheer literary skill, or as the result of transferring to his book an intense personal experience, has made the somewhat monotonous and unrelieved as well as illicit passion of his personages intensely real and touching. Balzac, here, has not. It is not Philistinism, but common-sense, which objects to M. de Nueil's neglect of the most sensible of proverbs about the old love and the new.

"Sensibility" pursues us still in *La Grenadière,* and does not set us free in *Le Message,* a story which, by the way, was much twisted about in its author's hands, and underwent transformations too long to be summarized here. It may be brutal to feel little or no sympathy with the woes and willow-wearing of the guilty and beautiful Madame Wilesens (otherwise Lady Brandon) by the water of Loire; but I con-

fess that they leave me tearless, and I do not know that the subsequent appearances of Marie Gaston in *Deux Jeunes Mariées* and *Le Député d'Arcis* add to the attraction of this novelette. Jules Sandeau could have made a really touching thing of what was, I think, out of Balzac's way. *Le Message* was less so; there is a point of irony in it which commends itself to him, and which keeps it sweet and prevents it from sharing the mawkishness of the earlier stories. But it is slight.

In *Gobsck,* though not entirely, we shake off this unwonted and uncongenial influence, and come to matters in which Balzac was much more at home. The hero himself is interesting, the story of Derville and Jenny escapes mawkishness, and all the scenes in which the Restauds and Maxime de Trailles figure are admirably done and well worth reading. It is not necessary to take into consideration the important part which the Dutch Jew's granddaughter or grandniece Esther afterwards plays in the *Comédie*—he is good in himself, and a famous addition to Balzac's gallery of misers, the most interesting, if not the most authentic, ever arranged on that curious subject. It is lucky that *Gobseck* comes in this connection, for it tones up a dreary book wonderfully.

Pierre Grassou, which is included here for convenience, is a shorter sketch; but it is good in itself; it is very characteristic of its time, and is especially happy as giving the volume a touch of comedy which is grateful. The figure of the artist-*bourgeois,* neither Bohemian nor *buveur d'eau,* is excellently hit off, and the thing leaves us with all the sense of a pleasant afterpiece.

It takes M. de Lovenjoul nearly three of his large pages of small type to give an exact bibliography of the extraordinary mosaic which bears the title of *La Femme de Trente*

Ans. It must be sufficient here to say that most of its parts appeared separately in different periodicals (notably the *Revue de Paris*) during the very early thirties; that when in 1832 most of them appeared together in the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* they were independent stories; and that when the author did put them together, he at first adopted the title *Même Histoire.*

La Femme Abandonnée appeared in the *Revue de Paris* for September 1832, was a *Scène de la Vie de Province* next year, and was shifted to the *Vie Privée* when the *Comédie* was first arranged. *La Grenadière* followed it in the same review next month, and had the same subsequent history. The record of *Le Message* is much more complicated; and I must again refer those who wish to follow it exactly to M. de Lovenjoul. It is enough here to say that it at first appeared in the mid-February issue of the *Deux Mondes* for 1832, then complicated itself with *La Grande Bretêche* and its companion tales, and then imitated the stories which here precede it by being first a "provincial," and then, as it had already been, a "private" scene. *Gobseck,* unlike all these, had no newspaper ushering, but was a *Scène de la Vie Privée* from the first use of that title in 1830. Its own title, however, *Les Dangers de l'Inconduite* and *Papa Gobseck,* varied a little, and it once made an excursion to the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne,* but returned. *Pierre Grassou* was first printed in a miscellany named *Babel* in the year 1840, was republished with *Pierrette* in the same year, and joined the "Maison de Balzac" in 1844.

G. S.

A WOMAN OF THIRTY

To Louis Boulanger, Painter.

I.

EARLY MISTAKES

It was a Sunday morning in the beginning of April 1813, a morning which gave promise of one of those bright days when Parisians, for the first time in the year, behold dry pavements underfoot and a cloudless sky overhead. It was not yet noon when a luxurious cabriolet, drawn by two spirited horses, turned out of the Rue de Castiglione into the Rue de Rivoli, and drew up behind a row of carriages standing before the newly opened barrier half-way down the Terrasse des Feuillants. The owner of the carriage looked anxious and out of health; the thin hair on his sallow temples, turning gray already, gave a look of premature age to his face. He flung the reins to a servant who followed on horseback, and alighted to take in his arms a young girl whose dainty beauty had already attracted the eyes of loungers on the Terrasse. The little lady, standing upon the carriage step, graciously submitted to be taken by the waist, putting an arm round the neck of her guide, who set her down upon the pavement without so much as ruffling the trimming of her green rep dress. No lover would have been so careful. The stranger could only be the father of the young girl, who took his arm familiarly without a word of thanks, and hurried him into the Garden of the Tuileries.

The old father noted the wondering stare which some of the young men gave the couple, and the sad expression left his

face for a moment. Although he had long since reached the time of life when a man is fain to be content with such illusory delights as vanity bestows, he began to smile.

"They think you are my wife," he said in the young lady's ear, and he held himself erect and walked with slow steps, which filled his daughter with despair.

He seemed to take up the coquette's part for her; perhaps of the two, he was the more gratified by the curious glances directed at those little feet, shod with plum-colored prunella; at the dainty figure outlined by a low-cut bodice, filled in with an embroidered chemisette, which only partially concealed the girlish throat. Her dress was lifted by her movements as she walked, giving glimpses higher than the shoes of delicately moulded outlines beneath open-work silk stockings. More than one of the idlers turned and passed the pair again, to admire or to catch a second glimpse of the young face, about which the brown tresses played; there was a glow in its white and red, partly reflected from the rose-colored satin lining of her fashionable bonnet, partly due to the eagerness and impatience which sparkled in every feature. A mischievous sweetness lighted up the beautiful, almond-shaped dark eyes, bathed in liquid brightness, shaded by the long lashes and curving arch of eyebrow. Life and youth displayed their treasures in the petulant face and in the gracious outlines of the bust unspoiled even by the fashion of the day, which brought the girdle under the breast.

The young lady herself appeared to be insensible to admiration. Her eyes were fixed in a sort of anxiety on the Palace of the Tuileries, the goal, doubtless, of her petulant promenade. It wanted but fifteen minutes of noon, yet even at that early hour several women in gala dress were coming away from the Tuileries, not without backward glances at the gates and pouting looks of discontent, as if they regretted the lateness of the arrival which had cheated them of a longed-for spectacle. Chance carried a few words let fall by one of these disappointed fair ones to the ears of the charming stranger, and put her in a more than common uneasiness. The

elderly man watched the signs of impatience and apprehension which flitted across his companion's pretty face with interest, rather than amusement, in his eyes, observing her with a close and careful attention, which perhaps could only be prompted by some after-thought in the depths of a father's mind.

It was the thirteenth Sunday of the year 1813. In two days' time Napoleon was to set out upon the disastrous campaign in which he was to lose first Bessières, and then Duroc; he was to win the memorable battles of Lutzen and Bautzen, to see himself treacherously deserted by Austria, Saxony, Bavaria, and Bernadotte, and to dispute the dreadful field of Leipsic. The magnificent review commanded for that day by the Emperor was to be the last of so many which had long drawn forth the admiration of Paris and of foreign visitors. For the last time the Old Guard would execute their scientific military manœuvres with the pomp and precision which sometimes amazed the Giant himself. Napoleon was nearly ready for his duel with Europe. It was a sad sentiment which brought a brilliant and curious throng to the Tuileries. Each mind seemed to foresee the future, perhaps too in every mind another thought was dimly present, how that in that future, when the heroic age of France should have taken the half-fabulous color with which it is tinged for us to-day, men's imaginations would more than once seek to retrace the picture of the pageant which they were assembled to behold.

"Do let us go more quickly, father; I can hear the drums," the young girl said, and in a half-teasing, half-coaxing manner she urged her companion forward.

"The troops are marching into the Tuileries," said he.

"Or marching out of it—everybody is coming away," she answered in childish vexation, which drew a smile from her father.

"The review only begins at half-past twelve," he said; he had fallen half behind his impetuous daughter.

It might have been supposed that she meant to hasten their

progress by the movement of her right arm, for it swung like an oar blade through the water. In her impatience she had crushed her handkerchief into a ball in her tiny, well-gloved fingers. Now and then the old man smiled, but the smiles were succeeded by an anxious look which crossed his withered face and saddened it. In his love for the fair young girl by his side, he was as fain to exalt the present moment as to dread the future. "She is happy to-day; will her happiness last?" he seemed to ask himself, for the old are somewhat prone to foresee their own sorrows in the future of the young.

Father and daughter reached the peristyle under the tower where the tricolor flag was still waving; but as they passed under the arch by which people came and went between the Gardens of the Tuileries and the Place du Carrousel, the sentries on guard called out sternly:

"No admittance this way."

By standing on tiptoe the young girl contrived to catch a glimpse of a crowd of well-dressed women, thronging either side of the old marble arcade along which the Emperor was to pass.

"We were too late in starting, father; you can see that quite well." A little piteous pout revealed the immense importance which she attached to the sight of this particular review.

"Very well, Julie—let us go away. You dislike a crush."

"Do let us stay, father. Even here I may catch a glimpse of the Emperor; he might die during this campaign, and then I should never have seen him."

Her father shuddered at the selfish speech. There were tears in the girl's voice; he looked at her, and thought that he saw tears beneath her lowered eyelids; tears caused not so much by the disappointment as by one of the troubles of early youth, a secret easily guessed by an old father. Suddenly Julie's face flushed, and she uttered an exclamation. Neither her father nor the sentinels understood the meaning of the cry; but an officer within the barrier, who sprang across the court towards the staircase, heard it, and turned abruptly at the sound. He went to the arcade by the Gardens of the

Tuileries, and recognized the young lady who had been hidden for a moment by the tall bearskin caps of the grenadiers. He set aside in favor of the pair the order which he himself had given. Then, taking no heed of the murmurings of the fashionable crowd seated under the arcade, he gently drew the enraptured child towards him.

"I am no longer surprised at her vexation and enthusiasm, if *you* are in waiting," the old man said with a half-mocking, half-serious glance at the officer.

"If you want a good position, M. le Duc," the young man answered, "we must not spend any time in talking. The Emperor does not like to be kept waiting, and the Grand Marshal has sent me to announce our readiness."

As he spoke, he had taken Julie's arm with a certain air of old acquaintance, and drew her rapidly in the direction of the Place du Carrousel. Julie was astonished at the sight. An immense crowd was penned up in a narrow space, shut in between the gray walls of the palace and the limits marked out by chains round the great sanded squares in the midst of the courtyard of the Tuileries. The cordon of sentries posted to keep a clear passage for the Emperor and his staff had great difficulty in keeping back the eager humming swarm of human beings.

"Is it going to be a very fine sight?" Julie asked (she was radiant now).

"Pray take care!" cried her guide, and seizing Julie by the waist, he lifted her up with as much vigor as rapidity and set her down beside a pillar.

But for his prompt action, his gazing kinswoman would have come into collision with the hindquarters of a white horse which Napoleon's Mameluke held by the bridle; the animal in its trappings of green velvet and gold stood almost under the arcade, some ten paces behind the rest of the horses in readiness for the Emperor's staff.

The young officer placed the father and daughter in front of the crowd in the first space to the right, and recommended them by a sign to the two veteran grenadiers on either side.

Then he went on his way into the palace; a look of great joy and happiness had succeeded to his horror-struck expression when the horse backed. Julie had given his hand a mysterious pressure; had she meant to thank him for the little service he had done her, or did she tell him, "After all, I shall really see you?" She bent her head quite graciously in response to the respectful bow by which the officer took leave of them before he vanished.

The old man stood a little behind his daughter. He looked grave. He seemed to have left the two young people together for some purpose of his own, and now he furtively watched the girl, trying to lull her into false security by appearing to give his whole attention to the magnificent sight in the Place du Carrousel. When Julie's eyes turned to her father with the expression of a schoolboy before his master, he answered her glance by a gay, kindly smile, but his own keen eyes had followed the officer under the arcade, and nothing of all that passed was lost upon him.

"What a grand sight!" said Julie in a low voice, as she pressed her father's hand; and indeed the pomp and picturesqueness of the spectacle in the Place du Carrousel drew the same exclamation from thousands upon thousands of spectators, all agape with wonder. Another array of sightseers, as tightly packed as the ranks behind the old noble and his daughter, filled the narrow strip of pavement by the railings which crossed the Place du Carrousel from side to side in a line parallel with the Palace of the Tuileries. The dense living mass, variegated by the colors of the women's dresses, traced out a bold line across the centre of the Place du Carrousel, filling in the fourth side of a vast parallelogram, surrounded on three sides by the Palace of the Tuileries itself. Within the precincts thus railed off stood the regiments of the Old Guard about to be passed in review, drawn up opposite the Palace in imposing blue columns, ten ranks in depth. Without and beyond in the Place du Carrousel stood several regiments likewise drawn up in parallel lines, ready to march in through the arch in the centre; the Triumphal Arch, where

the bronze horses of St. Mark from Venice used to stand in those days. At either end, by the Galeries du Louvre, the regimental bands were stationed, masked by the Polish Lancers then on duty.

The greater part of the vast graveled space was empty as an arena, ready for the evolutions of those silent masses disposed with the symmetry of military art. The sunlight blazed back from ten thousand bayonets in thin points of flame; the breeze ruffled the men's helmet plumes till they swayed like the crests of forest-trees before a gale. The mute glittering ranks of veterans were full of bright contrasting colors, thanks to their different uniforms, weapons, accoutrements, and aiguillettes; and the whole great picture, that miniature battle-field before the combat, was framed by the majestic towering walls of the Tuileries, which officers and men seemed to rival in their immobility. Involuntarily the spectator made the comparison between the walls of men and the walls of stone. The spring sunlight, flooding white masonry reared but yesterday and buildings centuries old, shone full likewise upon thousands of bronzed faces, each one with its own tale of perils passed, each one gravely expectant of perils to come.

The colonels of the regiments came and went alone before the ranks of heroes; and behind the masses of troops, checkered with blue and silver and gold and purple, the curious could discern the tricolor pennons on the lances of some half-a-dozen indefatigable Polish cavalry, rushing about like shepherds' dogs in charge of a flock, caracoling up and down between the troops and the crowd, to keep the gazers within their proper bounds. But for this slight flutter of movement, the whole scene might have been taking place in the courtyard of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The very spring breeze, ruffling up the long fur on the grenadiers' bearskins, bore witness to the men's immobility, as the smothered murmur of the crowd emphasized their silence. Now and again the jingling of Chinese bells, or a chance blow to a big drum, woke the reverberating echoes of the Imperial Palace with a sound like the far-off rumblings of thunder.

An indescribable, unmistakable enthusiasm was manifest in the expectancy of the multitude. France was about to take farewell of Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which the meanest citizen foresaw the perils. The existence of the French Empire was at stake—to be, or not to be. The whole citizen population seemed to be as much inspired with this thought as that other armed population standing in serried and silent ranks in the enclosed space, with the Eagles and the genius of Napoleon hovering above them.

Those very soldiers were the hope of France, her last drop of blood; and this accounted for not a little of the anxious interest of the scene. Most of the gazers in the crowd had bidden farewell—perhaps farewell for ever—to the man who made up the rank and file of the battalions; and even those most hostile to the Emperor, in their hearts, put up fervent prayers to heaven for the glory of France; and those most weary of the struggle with the rest of Europe had left their hatreds behind as they passed in under the Triumphal Arch. They too felt that in the hour of danger Napoleon meant France herself.

The clock of the Tuileries struck the half-hour. In a moment the hum of the crowd ceased. The silence was so deep that you might have heard a child speak. The old noble and his daughter, wholly intent, seeming to live only by their eyes, caught a distinct sound of spurs and clank of swords echoing up under the sonorous peristyle.

And suddenly there appeared a short, somewhat stout figure in a green uniform, white trousers, and riding boots; a man wearing on his head a cocked hat well-nigh as magically potent as its wearer; the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honor rose and fell on his breast, and a short sword hung at his side. At one and the same moment the man was seen by all eyes in all parts of the square.

Immediately the drums beat a salute, both bands struck up a martial refrain, caught and repeated like a fugue by every instrument from the thinnest flutes to the largest drum. The clangor of that call to arms thrilled through every soul. The

colors dropped, and the men presented arms, one unanimous rhythmical movement shaking every bayonet from the foremost front near the Palace to the last rank in the Place du Carrousel. The words of command sped from line to line like echoes. The whole enthusiastic multitude sent up a shout of "Long live the Emperor!"

Everything shook, quivered, and thrilled at last. Napoleon had mounted his horse. It was his movement that had put life into those silent masses of men; the dumb instruments had found a voice at his coming, the Eagles and the colors had obeyed the same impulse which had brought emotion into all faces.

The very walls of the high galleries of the old palace seemed to cry aloud, "Long live the Emperor!"

There was something preternatural about it—it was magic at work, a counterfeit presentment of the power of God; or rather it was a fugitive image of a reign itself so fugitive.

And *he* the centre of such love, such enthusiasm and devotion, and so many prayers, he for whom the sun had driven the clouds from the sky, was sitting there on his horse, three paces in front of his Golden Squadron, with the Grand Marshal on his left, and the Marshal-in-waiting on his right. Amid all the outburst of enthusiasm at his presence not a feature of his face appeared to alter.

"Oh! yes. At Wagram, in the thick of the firing, on the field of Borodino, among the dead, always as cool as a cucumber *he* is!" said the grenadier, in answer to the questions with which the young girl plied him. For a moment Julie was absorbed in the contemplation of that face, so quiet in the security of conscious power. The Emperor noticed Mlle. de Chatillonest, and leaned to make some brief remark to Duroc, which drew a smile from the Grand Marshal. Then the review began.

If hitherto the young lady's attention had been divided between Napoleon's impassive face and the blue, red, and green ranks of troops, from this time forth she was wholly intent upon a young officer moving among the lines as they

performed their swift symmetrical evolutions. She watched him gallop with tireless activity to and from the group where the plainly dressed Napoleon shone conspicuous. The officer rode a splendid black horse. His handsome sky-blue uniform marked him out amid the variegated multitude as one of the Emperor's orderly staff-officers. His gold lace glittered in the sunshine which lighted up the aigrette on his tall, narrow shako, so that the gazer might have compared him to a will-o'-the-wisp, or to a visible spirit emanating from the Emperor to infuse movement into those battalions whose swaying bayonets flashed into flames; for, at a mere glance from his eyes, they broke and gathered again, surging to and fro like the waves in a bay, or again swept before him like the long ridges of high-crested wave which the vexed Ocean directs against the shore.

When the manœuvres were over the officer galloped back at full speed, pulled up his horse, and awaited orders. He was not ten paces from Julie as he stood before the Emperor, much as General Rapp stands in Gérard's *Battle of Austerlitz.* The young girl could behold her lover in all his soldierly splendor.

Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont, barely thirty years of age, was tall, slender, and well made. His well-proportioned figure never showed to better advantage than now as he exerted his strength to hold in the restive animal, whose back seemed to curve gracefully to the rider's weight. His brown masculine face possessed the indefinable charm of perfectly regular features combined with youth. The fiery eyes under the broad forehead, shaded by thick eyebrows and long lashes, looked like white ovals bordered by an outline of black. His nose had the delicate curve of an eagle's beak; the sinuous lines of the inevitable black moustache enhanced the crimson of the lips. The brown and tawny shades which overspread the wide high-colored cheeks told a tale of unusual vigor, and his whole face bore the impress of dashing courage. He was the very model which French artists seek to-day for the typical hero of Imperial France. The horse which he rode was covered

with sweat, the animal's quivering head denoted the last degree of restiveness; his hind hoofs were set down wide apart and exactly in a line, he shook his long thick tail to the wind; in his fidelity to his master he seemed to be a visible presentment of that master's devotion to the Emperor.

Julie saw her lover watching intently for the Emperor's glances, and felt a momentary pang of jealousy, for as yet he had not given her a look. Suddenly at a word from his sovereign Victor gripped his horse's flanks and set out at a gallop, but the animal took fright at a shadow cast by a post, shied, backed, and reared up so suddenly that his rider was all but thrown off. Julie cried out, her face grew white, people looked at her curiously, but she saw no one, her eyes were fixed upon the too mettlesome beast. The officer gave the horse a sharp admonitory cut with the whip, and galloped off with Napoleon's order.

Julie was so absorbed, so dizzy with sights and sounds, that unconsciously she clung to her father's arm so tightly that he could read her thoughts by the varying pressure of her fingers. When Victor was all but flung out of the saddle, she clutched her father with a convulsive grip as if she herself were in danger of falling, and the old man looked at his daughter's tell-tale face with dark and painful anxiety. Pity, jealousy, something even of regret stole across every drawn and wrinkled line of mouth and brow. When he saw the unwonted light in Julie's eyes, when that cry broke from her, when the convulsive grasp of her fingers drew away the veil and put him in possession of her secret, then with that revelation of her love there came surely some swift revelation of the future. Mournful forebodings could be read in his own face.

Julie's soul seemed at that moment to have passed into the officer's being. A torturing thought more cruel than any previous dread contracted the old man's painworn features, as he saw the glance of understanding that passed between the soldier and Julie. The girl's eyes were wet, her cheeks glowed with unwonted color. Her father turned abruptly and led her away into the Garden of the Tuileries.

"Why, father," she cried, "there are still the regiments in the Place du Carrousel to be passed in review."

"No, child, all the troops are marching out."

"I think you are mistaken, father; M. d'Aiglemont surely told them to advance——"

"But I feel ill, my child, and I do not care to stay."

Julie could readily believe the words when she glanced at his face; he looked quite worn out by his father's anxieties.

"Are you feeling very ill?" she asked indifferently, her mind was so full of other thoughts.

"Every day is a reprieve for me, is it not?" returned her father.

"Now do you mean to make me miserable again by talking about your death? I was in such spirits! Do pray get rid of those horrid gloomy ideas of yours."

The father heaved a sigh. "Ah! spoiled child," he cried, "the best hearts are sometimes very cruel. We devote our whole lives to you, you are our one thought, we plan for your welfare, sacrifice our tastes to your whims, idolize you, give the very blood in our veins for you, and all this is nothing, is it? Alas! yes, you take it all as a matter of course. If we would always have your smiles and your disdainful love, we should need the power of God in heaven. Then comes another, a lover, a husband, and steals away your heart."

Julie looked in amazement at her father; he walked slowly along, and there was no light in the eyes which he turned upon her.

"You hide yourself even from us," he continued, "but, perhaps, also you hide yourself from yourself——"

"What do you mean by that, father?"

"I think that you have secrets from me, Julie.—You love," he went on quickly, as he saw the color rise to her face. "Oh! I hoped that you would stay with your old father until he died. I hoped to keep you with me, still radiant and happy, to admire you as you were but so lately. So long as I knew nothing of your future I could believe in a happy lot for you; but now I cannot possibly take away with me a hope of happi-

ness for your life, for you love the colonel even more than the cousin. I can no longer doubt it."

"And why should I be forbidden to love him?" asked Julie, with lively curiosity in her face.

"Ah, my Julie, you would not understand me," sighed the father.

"Tell me, all the same," said Julie, with an involuntary petulant gesture.

"Very well, child, listen to me. Girls are apt to imagine noble and enchanting and totally imaginary figures in their own minds; they have fanciful extravagant ideas about men, and sentiment, and life; and then they innocently endow somebody or other with all the perfections of their day-dreams, and put their trust in him. They fall in love with this imaginary creature in the man of their choice; and then, when it is too late to escape from their fate, behold their first idol, the illusion made fair with their fancies, turns to an odious skeleton. Julie, I would rather have you fall in love with an old man than with the Colonel. Ah! if you could but see things from the standpoint of ten years hence, you would admit than my old experience was right. I know what Victor is, that gaiety of his is simply animal spirits—the gaiety of the barracks. He has no ability, and he is a spendthrift. He is one of those men whom Heaven created to eat and digest four meals a day, to sleep, to fall in love with the first woman that comes to hand, and to fight. He does not understand life. His kind heart, for he has a kind heart, will perhaps lead him to give his purse to a sufferer or to a comrade; *but* he is careless, he has not the delicacy of heart which makes us slaves to a woman's happiness, he is ignorant, he is selfish. There are plenty of *buts*——"

"But, father, he must surely be clever, he must have ability, or he would not be a colonel——"

"My dear, Victor will be a colonel all his life.—I have seen no one who appears to me to be worthy of you," the old father added, with a kind of enthusiasm.

He paused an instant, looked at his daughter, and added,

"Why, my poor Julie, you are still too young, too fragile, too delicate for the cares and rubs of married life. D'Aiglemont's relations have spoiled him, just as your mother and I have spoiled you. What hope is there that you two could agree, with two imperious wills diametrically opposed to each other? You will be either the tyrant or the victim, and either alternative means, for a wife, an equal sum of misfortune. But you are modest and sweet-natured, you would yield from the first. In short," he added, in a quivering voice, "there is a grace of feeling in you which would never be valued, and then——" he broke off, for the tears overcame him.

"Victor will give you pain through all the girlish qualities of your young nature," he went on, after a pause. "I know what soldiers are, my Julie; I have been in the army. In a man of that kind, love very seldom gets the better of old habits, due partly to the miseries amid which soldiers live, partly to the risks they run in a life of adventure."

"Then you mean to cross my inclinations, do you, father?" asked Julie, half in earnest, half in jest. "Am I to marry to please you and not to please myself?"

"To please me!" cried her father, with a start of surprise. "To please *me*, child? when you will not hear the voice that upbraids you so tenderly very much longer! But I have always heard children impute personal motives for the sacrifices that their parents make for them. Marry Victor, my Julie! Some day you will bitterly deplore his ineptitude, his thriftless ways, his selfishness, his lack of delicacy, his inability to understand love, and countless troubles arising through him. Then, remember, that here under these trees your old father's prophetic voice sounded in your ears in vain."

He said no more; he had detected a rebellious shake of the head on his daughter's part. Both made several paces towards the carriage which was waiting for them at the grating. During that interval of silence, the young girl stole a glance at her father's face, and little by little her sullen brow cleared. The intense pain visible on his bowed forehead made a lively impression upon her.

"Father," she began in gentle tremulous tones, "I promise to say no more about Victor until you have overcome your prejudices against him."

The old man looked at her in amazement. Two tears which filled his eyes overflowed down his withered cheeks. He could not take Julie in his arms in that crowded place; but he pressed her hand tenderly. A few minutes later when they had taken their places in the cabriolet, all the anxious thought which had gathered about his brow had completely disappeared. Julie's pensive attitude gave him far less concern than the innocent joy which had betrayed her secret during the review.

Nearly a year had passed since the Emperor's last review. In early March 1814 a calèche was rolling along the highroad from Amboise to Tours. As the carriage came out from beneath the green-roofed aisle of walnut trees by the post-house of la Frillière, the horses dashed forward with such speed that in a moment they gained the bridge built across the Cise at the point of its confluence with the Loire. There, however, they came to a sudden stand. One of the traces had given way in consequence of the furious pace at which the post-boy, obedient to his orders, had urged on four horses, the most vigorous of their breed. Chance, therefore, gave the two recently awakened occupants of the carriage an opportunity of seeing one of the most lovely landscapes along the enchanting banks of the Loire, and that at their full leisure.

At a glance the travelers could see to the right the whole winding course of the Cise meandering like a silver snake among the meadows, where the grass had taken the deep, bright green of early spring. To the left lay the Loire in all its glory. A chill morning breeze, ruffling the surface of the stately river, had fretted the broad sheets of water far and wide into a network of ripples, which caught the gleams of the sun, so that the green islets here and there in its course shone like gems set in a gold necklace. On the opposite bank the fair rich meadows of Touraine stretched away as far as the eye

could see; the low hills of the Cher, the only limits to the view, lay on the far horizon, a luminous line against the clear blue sky. Tours itself, framed by the trees on the islands in a setting of spring leaves, seemed to rise like Venice out of the waters, and her old cathedral towers soaring in air were blended with the pale fantastic cloud shapes in the sky.

Over the side of the bridge, where the carriage had come to a stand, the traveler looks along a line of cliffs stretching as far as Tours. Nature in some freakish mood must have raised these barriers of rock, undermined incessantly by the rippling Loire at their feet, for a perpetual wonder for spectators. The village of Vouvray nestles, as it were, among the clefts and crannies of the crags, which begin to describe a bend at the junction of the Loire and Cise. A whole population of vine-dressers lives, in fact, in appalling insecurity in holes in their jagged sides for the whole way between Vouvray and Tours. In some places there are three tiers of dwellings hollowed out, one above the other, in the rock, each row communicating with the next by dizzy staircases cut likewise in the face of the cliff. A little girl in a short red petticoat runs out into her garden on the roof of another dwelling; you can watch a wreath of hearth-smoke curling up among the shoots and trails of the vines. Men are at work in their almost perpendicular patches of ground, an old woman sits tranquilly spinning under a blossoming almond tree on a crumbling mass of rock, and smiles down on the dismay of the travelers far below her feet. The cracks in the ground trouble her as little as the precarious state of the old wall, a pendant mass of loose stones, only kept in position by the crooked stems of its ivy mantle. The sound of coopers' mallets rings through the skyey caves; for here, where Nature stints human industry of soil, the soil is everywhere tilled, and everywhere fertile.

No view along the whole course of the Loire can compare with the rich landscape of Touraine, here outspread beneath the traveler's eyes. The triple picture, thus barely sketched in outline, is one of those scenes which the imagination engraves for ever upon the memory; let a poet fall under its

charm, and he shall be haunted by visions which shall reproduce its romantic loveliness out of the vague substance of dreams.

As the carriage stopped on the bridge over the Cise, white sails came out here and there from among the islands in the Loire to add new grace to the perfect view. The subtle scent of the willows by the water's edge was mingled with the damp odor of the breeze from the river. The monotonous chant of a goat-herd added a plaintive note to the sound of birds' songs in a chorus which never ends; the cries of the boatmen brought tidings of distant busy life. Here was Touraine in all its glory, and the very height of the splendor of spring. Here was the one peaceful district in France in those troublous days; for it was so unlikely that a foreign army should trouble its quiet that Touraine might be said to defy invasion.

As soon as the calèche stopped, a head covered with a foraging cap was put out of the window, and soon afterwards an impatient military man flung open the carriage door and sprang down into the road to pick a quarrel with the postilion, but the skill with which the Tourangeau was repairing the trace restored Colonel d'Aiglemont's equanimity. He went back to the carriage, stretched himself to relieve his benumbed muscles, yawned, looked about him, and finally laid a hand on the arm of a young woman warmly wrapped up in a furred pelisse.

"Come, Julie," he said hoarsely, "just wake up and take a look at this country. It is magnificent."

Julie put her head out of the window. She wore a traveling cap of sable fur. Nothing could be seen of her but her face, for the whole of her person was completely concealed by the folds of her fur pelisse. The young girl who tripped to the review at the Tuileries with light footsteps and joy and gladness in her heart was scarcely recognizable in Julie d'Aiglemont. Her face, delicate as ever, had lost the rose-color which once gave it so rich a glow. A few straggling locks of black hair, straightened out by the damp night air, enhanced its dead whiteness, and all its life and sparkle seemed to be torpid.

Yet her eyes glittered with preternatural brightness in spite of the violet shadows under the lashes upon her wan cheeks.

She looked out with indifferent eyes over the fields towards the Cher, at the islands in the river, at the line of the crags of Vouvray stretching along the Loire towards Tours; then she sank back as soon as possible into her seat in the calèche. She did not care to give a glance to the enchanting valley of the Cise.

"Yes, it is wonderful," she said, and out in the open air her voice sounded weak and faint to the last degree. Evidently she had had her way with her father, to her misfortune.

"Would you not like to live here, Julie?"

"Yes; here or anywhere," she answered listlessly.

"Do you feel ill?" asked Colonel d'Aiglemont.

"No, not at all," she answered with momentary energy; and, smiling at her husband, she added, "I should like to go to sleep."

Suddenly there came a sound of a horse galloping towards them. Victor d'Aiglemont dropped his wife's hand and turned to watch the bend in the road. No sooner had he taken his eyes from Julie's pale face than all the assumed gaiety died out of it; it was as if a light had been extinguished. She felt no wish to look at the landscape, no curiosity to see the horseman who was galloping towards them at such a furious pace, and, ensconcing herself in her corner, stared out before her at the hindquarters of the post-horses, looking as blank as any Breton peasant listening to his *recteur's* sermon.

Suddenly a young man riding a valuable horse came out from behind the clump of poplars and flowering briar-rose.

"It is an Englishman," remarked the Colonel.

"Lord bless you, yes, General," said the post-boy; "he belongs to the race of fellows who have a mind to gobble up France, they say."

The stranger was one of the foreigners traveling in France at the time when Napoleon detained all British subjects within the limits of the Empire, by way of reprisals for the violation

of the Treaty of Amiens, an outrage of international law perpetrated by the Court of St. James. These prisoners, compelled to submit to the Emperor's pleasure, were not all suffered to remain in the houses where they were arrested, nor yet in the places of residence which at first they were permitted to choose. Most of the English colony in Touraine had been transplanted thither from different places where their presence was supposed to be inimical to the interests of the Continental Policy.

The young man, who was taking the tedium of the early morning hours on horseback, was one of these victims of bureaucratic tyranny. Two years previously, a sudden order from the Foreign Office had dragged him from Montpellier, whither he had goneon account of consumptive tendencies. He glanced at the Comte d'Aiglemont, saw that he was a military man, and deliberately looked away, turning his head somewhat abruptly towards the meadows by the Cise.

"The English are all as insolent as if the globe belonged to them," muttered the Colonel. "Luckily, Soult will give them a thrashing directly."

The prisoner gave a glance to the calèche as he rode by. Brief though that glance was, he had yet time to notice the sad expression which lent an indefinable charm to the Countess' pensive face. Many men are deeply moved by the mere semblance of suffering in a woman; they take the look of pain for a sign of constancy or of love. Julie herself was so much absorbed in the contemplation of the opposite cushion that she saw neither the horse nor the rider. The damaged trace meanwhile had been quickly and strongly repaired; the Count stepped into his place again; and the post-boy, doing his best to make up for lost time, drove the carriage rapidly along the embankment. On they drove under the overhanging cliffs, with their picturesque vine-dressers' huts and stores of wine maturing in their dark sides, till in the distance uprose the spire of the famous Abbey of Marmoutiers, the retreat of St. Martin.

"What can that diaphanous milord want with us?" ex-

claimed the Colonel, turning to assure himself that the horseman who had followed them from the bridge was the young Englishman.

After all, the stranger committed no breach of good manners by riding along on the footway, and Colonel d'Aiglemont was fain to lie back in his corner after sending a scowl in the Englishman's direction. But in spite of his hostile instincts, he could not help noticing the beauty of the animal and the graceful horsemanship of the rider. The young man's face was of that pale, fair-complexioned, insular type, which is almost girlish in the softness and delicacy of its color and texture. He was tall, thin, and fair-haired, dressed with the extreme and elaborate neatness characteristic of a man of fashion in prudish England. Any one might have thought that bashfulness rather than pleasure at the sight of the Countess had called up that flush into his face. Once only Julie raised her eyes and looked at the stranger, and then only because she was in a manner compelled to do so, for her husband called upon her to admire the action of the thoroughbred. It so happened that their glances clashed; and the shy Englishman, instead of riding abreast of the carriage, fell behind on this, and followed them at a distance of a few paces.

Yet the Countess had scarcely given him a glance; she saw none of the various perfections, human and equine, commended to her notice, and fell back again in the carriage with a slight movement of the eyelids intended to express her acquiescence in her husband's views. The Colonel fell asleep again, and both husband and wife reached Tours without another word. Not one of those enchanting views of ever-changing landscape through which they sped had drawn so much as a glance from Julie's eyes.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked now and again at her sleeping husband. While she looked, a sudden jolt shook something down upon her knees. It was her father's portrait, a miniature which she wore suspended about her neck by a black cord. At the sight of it, the tears, till then kept back, overflowed her eyes, but no one, save perhaps the Englishman, saw them

glitter there for a brief moment before they dried upon her pale cheeks.

Colonel d'Aiglemont was on his way to the South. Marshal Soult was repelling an English invasion of Béarn; and d'Aiglemont, the bearer of the Emperor's orders to the Marshal, seized the opportunity of taking his wife as far as Tours to leave her with an elderly relative of his own, far away from the dangers threatening Paris.

Very shortly the carriage rolled over the paved road of Tours, over the bridge, along the Grande-Rue, and stopped at last before the old mansion of the *ci-devant* Marquise de Listomère-Landon.

The Marquise de Listomère-Landon, with her white hair, pale face, and shrewd smile, was one of those fine old ladies who still seem to wear the paniers of the eighteenth century, and affects caps of an extinct mode. They are nearly alway caressing in their manners, as if the heyday of love still lingered on for these septuagenarian portraits of the age of Louis Quinze, with the faint perfume of *poudre à la maréchale* always clinging about them. Bigoted rather than pious, and less of bigots than they seem, women who can tell a story well and talk still better, their laughter comes more readily for an old memory than for a new jest—the present intrudes upon them.

When an old waiting-woman announced to the Marquise de Listomère-Landon (to give her the title which she was soon to resume) the arrival of a nephew whom she had not seen since the outbreak of the war with Spain, the old lady took off her spectacles with alacrity, shut the *Galerie de l'ancienne Cour* (her favorite work), and recovered something like youthful activity, hastening out upon the flight of steps to greet the young couple there.

Aunt and niece exchanged a rapid glance of survey.

"Good-morning, dear aunt," cried the Colonel, giving the old lady a hasty embrace. "I am bringing a young lady to put under your wing. I have come to put my treasure in your keeping. My Julie is neither jealous nor a coquette, she is

as good as an angel. I hope that she will not be spoiled here," he added, suddenly interrupting himself.

"Scapegrace!" returned the Marquise, with a satirical glance at her nephew.

She did not wait for her niece to approach her, but with a certain kindly graciousness went forward herself to kiss Julie, who stood there thoughtfully, to all appearance more embarrassed than curious concerning her new relation.

"So we are to make each other's acquaintance, are we, my love?" the Marquise continued. "Do not be too much alarmed of me. I always try not to be an old woman with young people."

On the way to the drawing-room, the Marquise ordered breakfast for her guests in provincial fashion; but the Count checked his aunt's flow of words by saying soberly that he could only remain in the house while the horses were changing. On this the three hurried into the drawing-room. The Colonel had barely time to tell the story of the political and military events which had compelled him to ask his aunt for a shelter for his young wife. While he talked on without interruption, the older lady looked from her nephew to her niece, and took the sadness in Julie's white face for grief at the enforced separation. "Eh! eh!" her looks seemed to say, "these young things are in love with each other."

The crack of the postilion's whip sounded outside in the silent old grass-grown courtyard. Victor embraced his aunt once more, and rushed out.

"Good-bye, dear," he said, kissing his wife, who had followed him down to the carriage.

"Oh! Victor, let me come still further with you," she pleaded coaxingly. "I do not want to leave you——"

"Can you seriously mean it?"

"Very well," said Julie, "since you wish it." The carriage disappeared.

"So you are very fond of my poor Victor?" said the Marquise, interrogating her niece with one of those sagacious glances which dowagers give younger women.

"Alas, madame!" said Julie, "must one not love a man well indeed to marry him?"

The words were spoken with an artless accent which revealed either a pure heart or inscrutable depths. How could a woman, who had been the friend of Duclos and the Maréchal de Richelieu, refrain from trying to read the riddle of this marriage? Aunt and niece were standing on the steps, gazing after the fast vanishing calèche. The look in the young Countess' eyes did not mean love as the Marquise understood it. The good lady was a Provencale, and her passions had been lively.

"So you were captivated by my good-for-nothing of a nephew?" she asked.

Involuntarily Julie shuddered, something in the experienced coquette's look and tone seemed to say that Mme. de Listomère-Landon's knowledge of her husband's character went perhaps deeper than his wife's. Mme. d'Aiglemont, in dismay, took refuge in this transparent dissimulation, ready to her hand, the first resource of an artless unhappiness. Mme. de Listomère appeared to be satisfied with Julie's answers; but in her secret heart she rejoiced to think that here was a love affair on hand to enliven her solitude, for that her niece had some amusing flirtation on foot she was fully convinced.

In the great drawing-room, hung with tapestry framed in strips of gilding, young Mme. d'Aiglemont sat before a blazing fire, behind a Chinese screen placed to shut out the cold draughts from the windows, and her heavy mood scarcely lightened. Among the old eighteenth-century furniture, under the old paneled ceiling, it was not very easy to be gay. Yet the young Parisienne took a sort of pleasure in this entrance upon a life of complete solitude and in the solemn silence of the old provincial house. She exchanged a few words with the aunt, a stranger, to whom she had written a bride's letter on her marriage, and then sat as silent as if she had been listening to an opera. Not until two hours had been spent in an atmosphere of quiet befitting la Trappe, did she suddenly awaken to a sense of uncourteous behavior, and

bethink herself of the short answers which she had given her aunt. Mme. de Listomère, with the gracious tact characteristic of a bygone age, had respected her niece's mood. When Mme. d'Aiglemont became conscious of her shortcomings, the dowager sat knitting, though as a matter of fact she had several times left the room to superintend preparations in the Green Chamber, whither the Countess' luggage had been transported; now, however, she had returned to her great armchair, and stole a glance from time to time at this young relative. Julie felt ashamed of giving way to irresistible broodings, and tried to earn her pardon by laughing at herself.

"My dear child, *we* know the sorrows of widowhood," returned her aunt. But only the eyes of forty years could have distinguished the irony hovering about the old lady's mouth.

Next morning the Countess improved. She talked. Mme. de Listomère no longer despaired of fathoming the new-made wife, whom yesterday she had set down as a dull, unsociable creature, and discoursed on the delights of the country, of dances, of houses where they could visit. All that day the Marquise's questions were so many snares; it was the old habit of the old Court, she could not help setting traps to discover her niece's character. For several days Julie, plied with temptations, steadfastly declined to seek amusement abroad; and much as the old lady's pride longed to exhibit her pretty niece, she was fain to renounce all hope of taking her into society, for the young Countess was still in mourning for her father, and found in her loss and her mourning dress a pretext for her sadness and desire for seclusion.

By the end of the week the dowager admired Julie's angelic sweetness of disposition, her diffident charm, her indulgent temper, and thenceforward began to take a prodigious interest in the mysterious sadness gnawing at this young heart. The Countess was one of those women who seem born to be loved and to bring happiness with them. Mme. de Listomère found her niece's society grown so sweet and precious, that she doted upon Julie, and could no longer think of parting with her. A month sufficed to establish an eternal friend-

ship between the two ladies. The dowager noticed, not without surprise, the changes that took place in Mme. d'Aiglemont; gradually her bright color died away, and her face became dead white. Yet, Julie's spirits rose as the bloom faded from her cheeks. Sometimes the dowager's sallies provoked outbursts of merriment or peals of laughter, promptly repressed, however, by some clamorous thought.

Mme. de Listomère had guessed by this time that it was neither Victor's absence nor a father's death which threw a shadow over her niece's life; but her mind was so full of dark suspicions, that she found it difficult to lay a finger upon the real cause of the mischief. Possibly truth is only discoverable by chance. A day came, however, at length when Julie flashed out before her aunt's astonished eyes into a complete forgetfulness of her marriage; she recovered the wild spirits of careless girlhood. Mme. de Listomère then and there made up her mind to fathom the depths of this soul, for its exceeding simplicity was as inscrutable as dissimulation.

Night was falling. The two ladies were sitting by the window which looked out upon the street, and Julie was looking thoughtful again, when some one went by on horseback.

"There goes one of your victims," said the Marquise.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked up; dismay and surprise blended in her face.

"He is a young Englishman, the Honorable Arthur Ormond, Lord Grenville's eldest son. His history is interesting. His physician sent him to Montpellier in 1802; it was hoped that in that climate he might recover from the lung complaint which was gaining ground. He was detained, like all his fellow-countrymen, by Bonaparte when war broke out. That monster cannot live without fighting. The young Englishman, by way of amusing himself, took to studying his own complaint, which was believed to be incurable. By degrees he acquired a liking for anatomy and physic, and took quite a craze for that kind of thing, a most

extraordinary taste in a man of quality, though the Regent certainly amused himself with chemistry! In short, Monsieur Arthur made astonishing progress in his studies; his health did the same under the faculty of Montpellier; he consoled his captivity, and at the same time his cure was thoroughly completed. They say that he spent two whole years in a cowshed, living on cresses and the milk of a cow brought from Switzerland, breathing as seldom as he could, and never speaking a word. Since he came to Tours he has lived quite alone; he is as proud as a peacock; but you have certainly made a conquest of him, for probably it is not on my account that he has ridden under the window twice every day since you have been here.—He has certainly fallen in love with you."

That last phrase roused the Countess like magic. Her involuntary start and smile took the Marquise by surprise. So far from showing a sign of the instinctive satisfaction felt by the most strait-laced of women when she learns that she has destroyed the peace of mind of some male victim, there was a hard, haggard expression in Julie's face—a look of repulsion amounting almost to loathing.

A woman who loves will put the whole world under the ban of Love's empire for the sake of the one whom she loves; but such a woman can laugh and jest; and Julie at that moment looked as if the memory of some recently escaped peril was too sharp and fresh not to bring with it a quick sensation of pain. Her aunt, by this time convinced that Julie did not love her nephew, was stupefied by the discovery that she loved nobody else. She shuddered lest a further discovery should show her Julie's heart disenchanted, lest the experience of a day, or perhaps of a night, should have revealed to a young wife the full extent of Victor's emptiness.

"If she has found him out, there is an end of it," thought the dowager. "My nephew will soon be made to feel the inconveniences of wedded life."

The Marquise now proposed to convert Julie to the monarchical doctrines of the times of Louis Quinze; but a few

hours later she discovered, or, more properly speaking, guessed, the not uncommon state of affairs, and the real cause of her niece's low spirits.

Julie turned thoughtful on a sudden, and went to her room earlier than usual. When her maid left her for the night, she still sat by the fire in the yellow velvet depths of a great chair, an old-world piece of furniture as well suited for sorrow as for happy people. Tears flowed, followed by sighs and meditation. After a while she drew a little table to her, sought writing materials, and began to write. The hours went by swiftly. Julie's confidences made to the sheet of paper seemed to cost her dear; every sentence set her dreaming, and at last she suddenly burst into tears. The clocks were striking two. Her head, grown heavy as a dying woman's, was bowed over her breast. When she raised it, her aunt appeared before her as suddenly as if she had stepped out of the background of tapestry upon the walls.

"What can be the matter with you, child?" asked the Marquise. "Why are you sitting up so late? And why, in the first place, are you crying alone, at your age?"

Without further ceremony she sat down beside her niece, her eyes the while devouring the unfinished letter.

"Were you writing to your husband?"

"Do I know where he is?" returned the Countess.

Her aunt thereupon took up the sheet and proceeded to read it. She had brought her spectacles; the deed was premeditated. The innocent writer of the letter allowed her to take it without the slightest remark. It was neither lack of dignity nor consciousness of secret guilt which left her thus without energy. Her aunt had come in upon her at a crisis. She was helpless; right or wrong, reticence and confidence, like all things else, were matters of indifference. Like some young maid who has heaped scorn upon her lover, and feels so lonely and sad when evening comes, that she longs for him to come back or for a heart to which she can pour out her sorrow, Julie allowed her aunt to violate the seal which honor places upon an open letter, and sat musing while the Marquise read on:—

"My dear Louisa,—Why do you ask so often for the fulfilment of as rash a promise as two young and inexperienced girls could make? You say that you often ask yourself why I have given no answer to your questions for these six months. If my silence told you nothing, perhaps you will understand the reasons for it to-day, as you read the secrets which I am about to betray. I should have buried them for ever in the depths of my heart if you had not announced your own approaching marriage. You are about to be married, Louisa. The thought makes me shiver. Poor little one! marry, yes, in a few months' time one of the keenest pangs of regret will be the recollection of a self which used to be, of the two young girls who sat one evening under one of the tallest oak-trees on the hillside at Écouen, and looked along the fair valley at our feet in the light of the sunset, which caught us in its glow. We sat on a slab of rock in ecstasy, which sobered down into melancholy of the gentlest. You were the first to discover that the far-off sun spoke to us of the future. How inquisitive and how silly we were! Do you remember all the absurd things we said and did? We embraced each other; 'like lovers,' said we. We solemnly promised that the first bride should faithfully reveal to the other the mysteries of marriage, the joys which our childish minds imagined to be so delicious. That evening will complete your despair, Louisa. In those days you were young and beautiful and careless, if not radiantly happy; a few days of marriage, and you will be, what I am already—ugly, wretched, and old. Need I tell you how proud I was and how vain and glad to be married to Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont? And besides, how could I tell you now? for I cannot remember that old self. A few moments turned my girlhood to a dream. All through the memorable day which consecrated a chain, the extent of which was hidden from me, my behavior was not free from reproach. Once and again my father tried to repress my spirits; the joy which I showed so plainly was thought unbefitting the occasion, my talk scarcely innocent, simply be-

cause I was so innocent. I played endless child's tricks with my bridal veil, my wreath, my gown. Left alone that night in the room whither I had been conducted in state, I planned a piece of mischief to tease Victor. While I awaited his coming, my heart beat wildly, as it used to do when I was a child stealing into the drawing-room on the last day of the old year to catch a glimpse of the New Year's gifts piled up there in heaps. When my husband came in and looked for me, my smothered laughter ringing out from beneath the lace in which I had shrouded myself, was the last outburst of the delicious merriment which brightened our games in childhood . . ."

When the dowager had finished reading the letter, and after such a beginning the rest must have been sad indeed, she slowly laid her spectacles on the table, put the letter down beside them, and looked fixedly at her niece. Age had not dimmed the fire in those green eyes as yet.

"My little girl," she said, "a married woman cannot write such a letter as this to a young unmarried woman; it is scarcely proper——"

"So I was thinking," Julie broke in upon her aunt. "I felt ashamed of myself while you were reading it."

"If a dish at table is not to our taste, there is no occasion to disgust others with it, child," the old lady continued benignly, "especially when marriage has seemed to us all, from Eve downwards, so excellent an institution. . . . You have no mother?"

The Countess trembled, then she raised her face meekly, and said:

"I have missed my mother many times already during the past year; but I have myself to blame, I would not listen to my father. He was opposed to my marriage; he disapproved of Victor as a son-in-law."

She looked at her aunt. The old face was lighted up with a kindly look, and a thrill of joy dried Julie's tears. She held out her young, soft hand to the old Marquise, who seemed

to ask for it, and the understanding between the two women was completed by the close grasp of their fingers.

"Poor orphan child!"

The words came like a final flash of enlightenment to Julie. It seemed to her that she heard her father's prophetic voice again.

"Your hands are burning! Are they always like this?" asked the Marquise.

"The fever only left me seven or eight days ago."

"You had a fever upon you, and said nothing about it to me!"

"I have had it for a year," said Julie, with a kind of timid anxiety.

"My good little angel, then your married life hitherto has been one long time of suffering?"

Julie did not venture to reply, but an affirmative sign revealed the whole truth.

"Then you are unhappy?"

"Oh! no, no, aunt. Victor loves me, he almost idolizes me, and I adore him, he is so kind."

"Yes, you love him; but you avoid him, do you not?"

"Yes . . . sometimes. . . . He seeks me too often."

"And often when you are alone you are troubled with the fear that he may suddenly break in upon your solitude?"

"Alas! yes, aunt. But, indeed, I love him, I do assure you."

"Do you not, in your own thoughts, blame yourself because you find it impossible to share his pleasures? Do you never think at times that marriage is a heavier yoke than an illicit passion could be?"

"Oh! that is just it," she wept. "It is all a riddle to me, and can you guess it all? My faculties are benumbed, I have no ideas, I can scarcely see at all. I am weighed down by vague dread, which freezes me till I cannot feel, and keeps me in continual torpor. I have no voice with which to pity myself, no words to express my trouble. I suffer, and I am ashamed to suffer when Victor is happy at my cost."

"Babyish nonsense, and rubbish, all of it!" exclaimed the aunt, and a gay smile, an after-glow of the joys of her own youth, suddenly lighted up her withered face.

"And do you too laugh!" the younger woman cried despairingly.

"It was just my own case," the Marquise returned promptly. "And now that Victor has left you, you have become a girl again, recovering a tranquillity without pleasure and without pain, have you not?"

Julie opened wide eyes of bewilderment.

"In fact, my angel, you adore Victor, do you not? But still you would rather be a sister to him than a wife, and, in short, your marriage is emphatically not a success?"

"Well—no, aunt. But why do you smile?"

"Oh! you are right, poor child! There is nothing very amusing in all this. Your future would be big with more than one mishap if I had not taken you under my protection, if my old experience of life had not guessed the very innocent cause of your troubles. My nephew did not deserve his good fortune, the blockhead! In the reign of our well-beloved Louis Quinze, a young wife in your position would very soon have punished her husband for behaving like a ruffian. The selfish creature! The men who serve under this Imperial tyrant are all of them ignorant boors. They take brutality for gallantry; they know no more of women than they know of love; and imagine that because they go out to face death on the morrow, they may dispense to-day with all consideration and attentions for us. The time was when a man could love and die too at the proper time. My niece, I will form you. I will put an end to this unhappy divergence between you, a natural thing enough, but it would end in mutual hatred and desire for a divorce, always supposing that you did not die on the way to despair."

Julie's amazement equaled her surprise as she listened to her aunt. She was surprised by her language, dimly divining rather than appreciating the wisdom of the words she heard, and very much dismayed to find what this relative,

out of a great experience, passed judgment upon Victor as her father had done, though in somewhat milder terms. Perhaps some quick prevision of the future crossed her mind; doubtless, at any rate, she felt the heavy weight of the burden which must inevitably overwhelm her, for she burst into tears, and sprang to the old lady's arms. "Be my mother," she sobbed.

The aunt shed no tears. The Revolution had left old ladies of the Monarchy but few tears to shed. Love, in bygone days, and the Terror at a later time, had familiarized them with extremes of joy and anguish in such a sort that, amid the perils of life, they preserved their dignity and coolness, a capacity for sincere but undemonstrative affection which never disturbed their well-bred self-possession, and a dignity of demeanor which a younger generation has done very ill to discard.

The dowager took Julie in her arms, and kissed her on the forehead with a tenderness and pity more often found in women's ways and manner than in their hearts. Then she coaxed her niece with kind, soothing words, assured her of a happy future, lulled her with promises of love, and put her to bed as if she had been not a niece, but a daughter, a much-loved daughter whose hopes and cares she had made her own. Perhaps the old Marquise had found her own youth and inexperience and beauty again in this nephew's wife. And the Countess fell asleep, happy to have found a friend, nay, a mother, to whom she could tell everything freely.

Next morning, when the two women kissed each other with heartfelt kindness, and that look of intelligence which marks a real advance in friendship, a closer intimacy between two souls, they heard the sound of horsehoofs, and, turning both together, saw the young Englishman ride slowly past the window, after his wont. Apparently he had made a certain study of the life led by the two lonely women, for he never failed to ride by as they sat at breakfast, and again at dinner. His horse slackened pace of its own accord, and for the space of time required to pass the two windows in the room, its

rider turned a melancholy look upon the Countess, who seldom deigned to take the slightest notice of him. Not so the Marquise. Minds not necessarily little find it difficult to resist the little curiosity which fastens upon the most trifling event that enlivens provincial life; and the Englishman's mute way of expressing his timid, earnest love tickled Mme. de Listomère. For her the periodically recurrent glance became a part of the day's routine, hailed daily with new jests. As the two women sat down to table, both of them looked out at the same moment. This time Julie's eyes met Arthur's with such a precision of sympathy that the color rose to her face. The stranger immediately urged his horse into a gallop and went.

"What is to be done, madame?" asked Julie. "People see this Englishman go past the house, and they will take it for granted that I——"

"Yes," interrupted her aunt.

"Well, then, could I not tell him to discontinue his promenades?"

"Would not that be a way of telling him that he was dangerous? You might put that notion into his head. And besides, can you prevent a man from coming and going as he pleases? Our meals shall be served in another room to-morrow; and when this young gentleman sees us no longer, there will be an end of making love to you through the window. There, dear child, that is how a woman of the world does."

But the measure of Julie's misfortune was to be filled up. The two women had scarcely risen from table when Victor's man arrived in hot haste from Bourges with a letter for the Countess from her husband. The servant had ridden by unfrequented ways.

Victor sent his wife news of the downfall of the Empire and the capitulation of Paris. He himself had gone over to the Bourbons, and all France was welcoming them back with transports of enthusiasm. He could not go so far as Tours, but he begged her to come at once to join him at Orleans,

where he hoped to be in readiness with passports for her. His servant, an old soldier, would be her escort as far as Orleans; he (Victor) believed that the road was still open.

"You have not a moment to lose, madame," said the man. "The Prussians, Austrians, and English are about to effect a junction either at Blois or at Orleans."

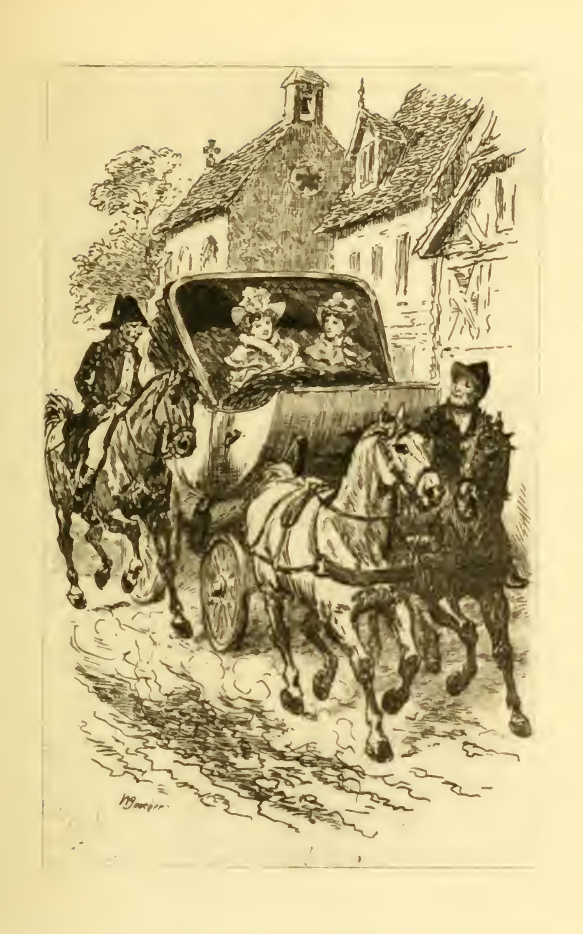
A few hours later, Julie's preparations were made, and she started out upon her journey in an old traveling carriage lent by her aunt.

"Why should you not come with us to Paris?" she asked, as she put her arms about the Marquise. "Now that the Bourbons have come back, you would be——"

"Even if there had not been this unhoped-for return, I should still have gone to Paris, my poor child, for my advice is only too necessary to both you and Victor. So I shall make all my preparations for rejoining you there."

Julie set out. She took her maid with her, and the old soldier galloped beside the carriage as escort. At nightfall, as they changed horses for the last stage before Blois, Julie grew uneasy. All the way from Amboise she had heard the sound of wheels behind them, a carriage following hers had kept at the same distance. She stood on the step and looked out to see who her traveling companions might be, and in the moonlight saw Arthur standing three paces away, gazing fixedly at the chaise which contained her. Again their eyes met. The Countess hastily flung herself back in her seat, but a feeling of dread set her pulses throbbing. It seemed to her, as to most innocent and inexperienced young wives, that she was herself to blame for this love which she had all unwittingly inspired. With this thought came an instinctive terror, perhaps a sense of her own helplessness before aggressive audacity. One of a man's strongest weapons is the terrible power of compelling a woman to think of him when her naturally lively imagination takes alarm or offence at the thought that she is followed.

The Countess bethought herself of her aunt's advice, and made up her mind that she would not stir from her place



during the rest of the journey; but every time the horses were changed she heard the Englishman pacing round the two carriages, and again upon the road heard the importunate sound of the wheels of his calèche. Julie soon began to think that, when once reunited to her husband, Victor would know how to defend her against this singular persecution.

"Yet suppose that in spite of everything, this young man does not love me?" This was the thought that came last of all.

No sooner did she reach Orleans than the Prussians stopped the chaise. It was wheeled into an inn-yard and put under a guard of soldiers. Resistance was out of the question. The foreign soldiers made the three travelers understand by signs that they were obeying orders, and that no one could be allowed to leave the carriage. For about two hours the Countess sat in tears, a prisoner surrounded by the guard, who smoked, laughed, and occasionally stared at her with insolent curiosity. At last, however, she saw her captors fall away from the carriage with a sort of respect, and heard at the same time the sound of horses entering the yard. Another moment, and a little group of foreign officers, with an Austrian general at their head, gathered about the door of the traveling carriage.

"Madame," said the General, "pray accept our apologies. A mistake has been made. You may continue your journey without fear; and here is a passport which will spare you all further annoyance of any kind."

Trembling the Countess took the paper, and faltered out some vague words of thanks. She saw Arthur, now wearing an English uniform, standing beside the General, and could not doubt that this prompt deliverance was due to him. The young Englishman himself looked half glad, half melancholy; his face was turned away, and he only dared to steal an occasional glance at Julie's face.

Thanks to the passport, Mme. d'Aiglemont reached Paris without further misadventure, and there she found her husband. Victor d'Aiglemont, released from his oath of allegiance

to the Emperor, had met with a most flattering reception from the Comte d'Artois, recently appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom by his brother Louis XVIII. D'Aiglemont received a commission in the Life Guards, equivalent to the rank of general. But amid the rejoicings over the return of the Bourbons, fate dealt poor Julie a terrible blow. The death of the Marquise de Listomère-Landon was an irreparable loss. The old lady died of joy and of an accession of gout to the heart when the Duc d'Angoulême came back to Tours, and the one living being entitled by her age to enlighten Victor, the woman who, by discreet counsels, might have brought about perfect unanimity of husband and wife, was dead; and Julie felt the full extent of her loss. Henceforward she must stand alone between herself and her husband. But she was young and timid; there could be no doubt of the result, or that from the first she would elect to bear her lot in silence. The very perfection of her character forbade her to venture to swerve from her duties, or to attempt to inquire into the cause of her sufferings, for to put an end to them would have been to venture on delicate ground, and Julie's girlish modesty shrank from the thought.

A word as to M. d'Aiglemont's destinies under the Restoration.

How many men are there whose utter incapacity is a secret kept from most of their acquaintance. For such as these high rank, high office, illustrious birth, a certain veneer of politeness, and considerable reserve of manner, or the *prestige* of great fortunes, are but so many sentinels to turn back critics who would penetrate to the presence of the real man. Such men are like kings, in that their real figure, character, and life can never be known nor justly appreciated, because they are always seen from too near or too far. Factitious merit has a way of asking questions and saying little; and understands the art of putting others forward to save the necessity of posing before them; then, with a happy knack of its own, it draws and attaches others by the thread of the ruling passion or self-interest, keeping men of far greater

abilities in play like puppets, and despising those whom it has brought down to its own level. The petty fixed idea naturally prevails; it has the advantage of persistence over the plasticity of great thoughts.

The observer who should seek to estimate and appraise the negative values of these empty heads needs subtlety rather than superior wit for the task; patience is a more necessary part of his judicial outfit than great mental grasp, cunning and tact rather than any elevation or greatness of ideas. Yet skilfully as such usurpers can cover and defend their weak points, it is difficult to delude wife and mother and children and the house-friend of the family; fortunately for them, however, these persons almost always keep a secret which in a manner touches the honor of all, and not unfrequently go so far as to help to foist the imposture upon the public. And if, thanks to such domestic conspiracy, many a noodle passes current for a man of ability, on the other hand many another who has real ability is taken for a noodle to redress the balance, and the total average of this kind of false coin in circulation in the state is a pretty constant quantity.

Bethink yourself now of the part to be played by a clever woman quick to think and feel, mated with a husband of this kind, and can you not see a vision of lives full of sorrow and self-sacrifice? Nothing upon earth can repay such hearts so full of love and tender tact. Put a strong-willed woman in this wretched situation, and she will force a way out of it for herself by a crime, like Catherine II., whom men nevertheless style "the Great." But these women are not all seated upon thrones, they are for the most part doomed to domestic unhappiness none the less terrible because obscure.

Those who seek consolation in this present world for their woes often effect nothing but a change of ills if they remain faithful to their duties; or they commit a sin if they break the laws for their pleasure. All these reflections are applicable to Julie's domestic life.

Before the fall of Napoleon nobody was jealous of d'Aiglemont. He was one colonel among many, an efficient orderly

staff-officer, as good a man as you could find for a dangerous mission, as unfit as well could be for an important command. D'Aiglemont was looked upon as a dashing soldier such as the Emperor liked, the kind of man whom his mess usually calls "a good fellow." The Restoration gave him back his title of Marquis, and did not find him ungrateful; he followed the Bourbons into exile at Ghent, a piece of logical loyalty which falsified the horoscope drawn for him by his late father-in-law, who predicted that Victor would remain a colonel all his life. After the Hundred Days he received the appointment of Lieutenant-General, and for the second time became a marquis; but it was M. d'Aiglemont's ambition to be a peer of France. He adopted, therefore, the maxims and the politics of the *Conservateur,* cloaked himself in dissimulation which hid nothing (there being nothing to hide), cultivated gravity of countenance and the art of asking questions and saying little, and was taken for a man of profound wisdom. Nothing drew him from his intrenchments behind the forms of politeness; he laid in a provision of formulas, and made lavish use of his stock of the catch-words coined at need in Paris to give fools the small change for the ore of great ideas and events. Among men of the world he was reputed a man of taste and discernment; and as a bigoted upholder of aristocratic opinions he was held up for a noble character. If by chance he slipped now and again into his old light-heartedness or levity, others were ready to discover an undercurrent of diplomatic intention beneath his inanity and silliness. "Oh! he only says exactly as much as he means to say," thought these excellent people.

So d'Aiglemont's defects and good qualities stood him alike in good stead. He did nothing to forfeit a high military reputation gained by his dashing courage, for he had never been a commander-in-chief. Great thoughts surely were engraven upon that manly aristocratic countenance, which imposed upon every one but his own wife. And when everybody else believed in the Marquis d'Aiglemont's imaginary talents, the Marquis persuaded himself before he had done that he was

one of the most remarkable men at Court, where, thanks to his purely external qualifications, he was in favor and taken at his own valuation.

At home, however, M. d'Aiglemont was modest. Instinctively he felt that his wife, young though she was, was his superior; and out of this involuntary respect there grew an occult power which the Marquise was obliged to wield in spite of all her efforts to shake off the burden. She became her husband's adviser, the director of his actions and his fortunes. It was an unnatural position; she felt it as something of a humiliation, a source of pain to be buried in the depths of her heart. From the first her delicately feminine instinct told her that it is a far better thing to obey a man of talent than to lead a fool; and that a young wife compelled to act and think like a man is neither man nor woman, but a being who lays aside all the charms of her womanhood along with its misfortunes, yet acquires none of the privileges which our laws give to the stronger sex. Beneath the surface her life was a bitter mockery. Was she not compelled to protect her protector, to worship a hollow idol, a poor creature who flung her the love of a selfish husband as the wages of her continual self-sacrifice; who saw nothing in her but the woman; and who either did not think it worth while, or (wrong quite as deep) did not think at all of troubling himself about her pleasures, of inquiring into the cause of her low spirits and dwindling health? And the Marquis, like most men who chafe under a wife's superiority, saved his self-love by arguing from Julie's physical feebleness a corresponding lack of mental power, for which he was pleased to pity her; and he would cry out upon fate which had given him a sickly girl for a wife. The executioner posed, in fact, as the victim.

All the burdens of this dreary lot fell upon the Marquise, who still must smile upon her foolish lord, and deck a house of mourning with flowers, and make a parade of happiness in a countenance wan with secret torture. And with this sense of responsibility for the honor of both, with the magnificent immolation of self, the young Marquise unconsciously

acquired a wifely dignity, a consciousness of virtue which became her safeguard amid many dangers.

Perhaps, if her heart were sounded to the very depths, this intimate closely hidden wretchedness, following upon her unthinking girlish first love, had roused in her an abhorrence of passion; possibly she had no conception of its rapture, nor of forbidden but frenzied bliss for which some women will renounce all the laws of prudence and the principles of conduct upon which society is based. She put from her like a dream the thought of bliss and tender harmony of love promised by Mme. de Listomère-Landon's mature experience, and waited resignedly for the end of her troubles with a hope that she might die young.

Her health had declined daily since her return from Touraine; her life seemed to be measured to her in suffering; yet her ill-health was graceful, her malady seemed little more than languor, and might well be taken by careless eyes for a fine lady's whim of invalidism.

Her doctors had condemned her to keep to the sofa, and there among her flowers lay the Marquise, fading as they faded. She was not strong enough to walk, nor to bear the open air, and only went out in a closed carriage. Yet with all the marvels of modern luxury and invention about her, she looked more like an indolent queen than an invalid. A few of her friends, half in love perhaps with her sad plight and her fragile look, sure of finding her at home, and speculating no doubt upon her future restoration to health, would come to bring her the news of the day, and kept her informed of the thousand and one small events which fill life in Paris with variety. Her melancholy, deep and real though it was, was still the melancholy of a woman rich in many ways. The Marquise d'Aiglemont was like a flower, with a dark insect gnawing at its root.

Occasionally she went into society, not to please herself, but in obedience to the exigencies of the position which her husband aspired to take. In society her beautiful voice and

the perfection of her singing could always gain the social success so gratifying to a young woman; but what was social success to her, who drew nothing from it for her heart or her hopes? Her husband did not care for music. And, moreover, she seldom felt at her ease in salons, where her beauty attracted homage not wholly disinterested. Her position excited a sort of cruel compassion, a morbid curiosity. She was suffering from an inflammatory complaint not infrequently fatal, for which our nosology as yet has found no name, a complaint spoken of among women in confidential whispers. In spite of the silence in which her life was spent, the cause of her ill-health was no secret. She was still but a girl in spite of her marriage; the slightest glance threw her into confusion. In her endeavor not to blush, she was always laughing, always apparently in high spirits; she would never admit that she was not perfectly well, and anticipated questions as to her health by shame-stricken subterfuges.

In 1817, however, an event took place which did much to alleviate Julie's hitherto deplorable existence. A daughter was born to her, and she determined to nurse her child herself. For two years motherhood, its all-absorbing multiplicity of cares and anxious joys, made life less hard for her. She and her husband lived necessarily apart. Her physicians predicted improved health, but the Marquise herself put no faith in these auguries based on theory. Perhaps, like many a one for whom life has lost its sweetness, she looked forward to death as a happy termination of the drama.

But with the beginning of the year 1819 life grew harder than ever. Even while she congratulated herself upon the negative happiness which she had contrived to win, she caught a terrifying glimpse of yawning depths below it. She had passed by degrees out of her husband's life. Her fine tact and her prudence told her that misfortune must come, and that not singly, of this cooling of an affection already lukewarm and wholly selfish. Sure though she was of her ascendency over Victor, and certain as she felt of his unalterable esteem, she dreaded the influence of unbridled passions upon a head so empty, so full of rash self-conceit.

Julie's friends often found her absorbed in prolonged musings; the less clairvoyant among them would jestingly ask her what she was thinking about, as if a young wife would think of nothing but frivolity, as if there were not almost always a depth of seriousness in a mother's thoughts. Unhappiness, like great happiness, induces dreaming. Sometimes as Julie played with her little Hélène, she would gaze darkly at her, giving no reply to the childish questions in which a mother delights, questioning the present and the future as to the destiny of this little one. Then some sudden recollection would bring back the scene of the review at the Tuileries and fill her eyes with tears. Her father's prophetic warnings rang in her ears, and conscience reproached her that she had not recognized its wisdom. Her troubles had all come of her own wayward folly, and often she knew not which among so many was the hardest to bear. The sweet treasures of her soul were unheeded, and not only so, she could never succeed in making her husband understand her, even in the commonest everyday things. Just as the power to love developed and grew strong and active, a legitimate channel for the affections of her nature was denied her, and wedded love was extinguished in grave physical and mental sufferings. Add to this that she now felt for her husband that pity closely bordering upon contempt, which withers all affection at last. Even if she had not learned from conversations with some of her friends, from examples in life, from sundry occurrences in the great world, that love can bring ineffable bliss, her own wounds would have taught her to divine the pure and deep happiness which binds two kindred souls each to each.

In the picture which her memory traced of the past, Arthur's frank face stood out daily nobler and purer; it was but a flash, for upon that recollection she dared not dwell. The young Englishman's shy, silent love for her was the one event since her marriage which had left a lingering sweetness in her darkened and lonely heart. It may be that all the blighted hopes, all the frustrated longings which gradually

clouded Julie's mind, gathered, by a not unnatural trick of imagination, about this man—whose manners, sentiments, and character seemed to have so much in common with her own. This idea still presented itself to her mind fitfully and vaguely, like a dream; yet from that dream, which always ended in a sigh, Julie awoke to greater wretchedness, to keener consciousness of the latent anguish brooding beneath her imaginary bliss.

Occasionally her self-pity took wilder and more daring flights. She determined to have happiness at any cost; but still more often she lay a helpless victim of an indescribable numbing stupor, the words she heard had no meaning to her, or the thoughts which arose in her mind were so vague and indistinct that she could not find language to express them. Balked of the wishes of her heart, realities jarred harshly upon her girlish dreams of life, but she was obliged to devour her tears. To whom could she make complaint? Of whom be understood? She possessed, moreover, that highest degree of woman's sensitive pride, the exquisite delicacy of feeling which silences useless complainings and declines to use an advantage to gain a triumph which can only humiliate both victor and vanquished.

Julie tried to endow M. d'Aiglemont with her own abilities and virtues, flattering herself that thus she might enjoy the happiness lacking in her lot. All her woman's ingenuity and tact was employed in making the best of the situation; pure waste of pains unsuspected by him, whom she thus strengthened in his despotism. There were moments when misery became an intoxication, expelling all ideas, all self-control; but, fortunately, sincere piety always brought her back to one supreme hope; she found a refuge in the belief in a future life, a wonderful thought which enabled her to take up her painful task afresh. No elation of victory followed those terrible inward battles and throes of anguish; no one knew of those long hours of sadness; her haggard glances met no response from human eyes, and during the brief moments snatched by chance for weeping, her bitter tears fell unheeded and in solitude.

One evening in January 1820, the Marquise became aware of the full gravity of the crisis, gradually brought on by force of circumstances. When a husband and wife know each other thoroughly, and their relation has long been a matter of use and wont, when the wife has learned to interpret every slightest sign, when her quick insight discerns thoughts and facts which her husband keeps from her, a chance word, or a remark so carelessly let fall in the first instance, seems, upon subsequent reflection, like the swift breaking out of light. A wife not seldom suddenly awakes upon the brink of a precipice or in the depths of the abyss; and thus it was with the Marquise. She was feeling glad to have been left to herself for some days, when the real reason of her solitude flashed upon her. Her husband, whether fickle and tired of her, or generous and full of pity for her, was hers no longer.

In the moment of that discovery she forgot herself, her sacrifices, all that she had passed through, she remembered only that she was a mother. Looking forward, she thought of her daughter's fortune, of the future welfare of the one creature through whom some gleams of happiness came to her, of her Hélène, the only possession which bound her to life.

Then Julie wished to live to save her child from a stepmother's terrible thraldom, which might crush her darling's life. Upon this new vision of threatened possibilities followed one of those paroxysms of thought at fever-heat which consume whole years of life.

Henceforward husband and wife were doomed to be separated by a whole world of thought, and all the weight of that world she must bear alone. Hitherto she had felt sure that Victor loved her, in so far as he could be said to love; she had been the slave of pleasures which she did not share; to-day the satisfaction of knowing that she purchased his contentment with her tears was hers no longer. She was alone in the world, nothing was left to her now but a choice of evils. In the calm stillness of the night her despondency drained her

of all her strength. She rose from her sofa beside the dying fire, and stood in the lamplight gazing, dry-eyed, at her child, when M. d'Aiglemont came in. He was in high spirits. Julie called to him to admire Hélène as she lay asleep, but he met his wife's enthusiasm with a commonplace:

"All children are nice at that age."

He closed the curtains about the cot after a careless kiss on the child's forehead. Then he turned his eyes on Julie, took her hand and drew her to sit beside him on the sofa, where she had been sitting with such dark thoughts surging up in her mind.

"You are looking very handsome to-night, Mme. d'Aiglemont," he exclaimed, with the gaiety intolerable to the Marquise, who knew its emptiness so well.

"Where have you spent the evening?" she asked, with a pretence of complete indifference.

"At Mme. de Sérizy's."

He had taken up a fire-screen, and was looking intently at the gauze. He had not noticed the traces of tears on his wife's face. Julie shuddered. Words could not express the overflowing torrent of thoughts which must be forced down into inner depths.

"Mme. de Sérizy is giving a concert on Monday, and is dying for you to go. You have not been anywhere for some time past, and that is enough to set her longing to see you at her house. She is a good-natured woman, and very fond of you. I should be glad if you would go; I all but promised that you should——"

"I will go."

There was something so penetrating, so significant in the tones of Julie's voice, in her accent, in the glance that went with the words, that Victor, startled out of his indifference, stared at his wife in astonishment.

That was all. Julie had guessed that it was Mme. de Sérizy who had stolen her husband's heart from her. Her brooding despair benumbed her. She appeared to be deeply interested in the fire. Victor meanwhile still played with the

fire-screen. He looked bored, like a man who has enjoyed himself elsewhere, and brought home the consequent lassitude. He yawned once or twice, then he took up a candle in one hand, and with the other languidly sought his wife's neck for the usual embrace; but Julie stooped and received the good-night kiss upon her forehead; the formal, loveless grimace seemed hateful to her at that moment.

As soon as the door closed upon Victor, his wife sank into a seat. Her limbs tottered beneath her, she burst into tears. None but those who have endured the torture of some such scene can fully understand the anguish that it means, or divine the horror of the long-drawn tragedy arising out of it.

Those simple, foolish words, the silence that followed between the husband and wife, the Marquis' gesture and expression, the way in which he sat before the fire, his attitude as he made that futile attempt to put a kiss on his wife's throat,—all these things made up a dark hour for Julie, and the catastrophe of the drama of her sad and lonely life. In her madness she knelt down before the sofa, burying her face in it to shut out everything from sight, and prayed to Heaven, putting a new significance into the words of the evening prayer, till it became a cry from the depths of her own soul, which would have gone to her husband's heart if he had heard it.

The following week she spent in deep thought for her future, utterly overwhelmed by this new trouble. She made a study of it, trying to discover a way to regain her ascendency over the Marquis, scheming how to live long enough to watch over her daughter's happiness, yet to live true to her own heart. Then she made up her mind. She would struggle with her rival. She would shine once more in society. She would feign the love which she could no longer feel, she would captivate her husband's fancy; and when she had lured him into her power, she would coquet with him like a capricious mistress who takes delight in tormenting a lover. This hateful strategy was the only possible way out of her troubles. In this way she would become mistress of the situation; she

would prescribe her own sufferings at her good pleasure, and reduce them by enslaving her husband, and bringing him under a tyrannous yoke. She felt not the slightest remorse for the hard life which he should lead. At a bound she reached cold, calculating indifference—for her daughter's sake. She had gained a sudden insight into the treacherous, lying arts of degraded women; the wiles of coquetry, the revolting cunning which arouses such profound hatred in men at the mere suspicion of innate corruption in a woman.

Julie's feminine vanity, her interests, and a vague desire to inflict punishment, all wrought unconsciously with the mother's love within her to force her into a path where new sufferings awaited her. But her nature was too noble, her mind too fastidious, and, above all things, too open, to be the accomplice of these frauds for very long. Accustomed as she was to self-scrutiny, at the first step in vice—for vice it was—the cry of conscience must inevitably drown the clamor of the passions and of selfishness. Indeed, in a young wife whose heart is still pure, whose love has never been mated, the very sentiment of motherhood is overpowered by modesty. Modesty; is not all womanhood summed up in that? But just now Julie would not see any danger, anything wrong, in her new life.

She went to Mme. de Sérizy's concert. Her rival had expected to see a pallid, drooping woman. The Marquise wore rouge, and appeared in all the splendor of a toilet which enhanced her beauty.

Mme. de Sérizy was one of those women who claim to exercise a sort of sway over fashions and society in Paris; she issued her decrees, saw them received in her own circle, and it seemed to her that all the world obeyed them. She aspired to epigram, she set up for an authority in matters of taste. Literature, politics, men and women, all alike were submitted to her censorship, and the lady herself appeared to defy the censorship of others. Her house was in every respect a model of good taste.

Julie triumphed over the Countess in her own salon, filled

as it was with beautiful women and women of fashion. Julie's liveliness and sparkling wit gathered all the most distinguished men in the rooms about her. Her costume was faultless, for the despair of the women, who one and all envied her the fashion of her dress, and attributed the moulded outline of her bodice to the genius of some unknown dressmaker, for women would rather believe in miracles worked by the science of chiffons than in the grace and perfection of the form beneath.

When Julie went to the piano to sing Desdemona's song, the men in the rooms flocked about her to hear the celebrated voice so long mute, and there was a deep silence. The Marquise saw the heads clustered thickly in the doorways, saw all eyes turned upon her, and a sharp thrill of excitement quivered through her. She looked for her husband, gave him a coquettish side-glance, and it pleased her to see that his vanity was gratified to no small degree. In the joy of triumph she sang the first part of *Al piu salice.* Her audience was enraptured. Never had Malibran nor Pasta sung with expression and intonation so perfect. But at the beginning of the second part she glanced over the listening groups and saw—Arthur. He never took his eyes from her face. A quick shudder thrilled through her, and her voice faltered. Up hurried Mme. de Sérizy from her place.

"What is it, dear? Oh! poor little thing! she is in such weak health; I was so afraid when I saw her begin a piece so far beyond her strength."

The song was interrupted. Julie was vexed. She had not courage to sing any longer, and submitted to her rival's treacherous sympathy. There was a whisper among the women. The incident led to discussions; they guessed that the struggle had begun between the Marquise and Mme. de Sérizy, and their tongues did not spare the latter.

Julie's strange, perturbing presentiments were suddenly realized. Through her preoccupation with Arthur she had loved to imagine that with that gentle, refined face he must remain faithful to his first love. There were times when she

felt proud that this ideal, pure, and passionate young love should have been hers; the passion of the young lover whose thoughts are all for her to whom he dedicates every moment of his life, who blushes as a woman blushes, thinks as a woman might think, forgetting ambition, fame, and fortune in devotion to his love,—she need never fear a rival. All these things she had fondly and idly dreamed of Arthur; now all at once it seemed to her that her dream had come true. In the young Englishman's half-feminine face she read the same deep thoughts, the same pensive melancholy, the same passive acquiescence in a painful lot, and an endurance like her own. She saw herself in him. Trouble and sadness are the most eloquent of love's interpreters, and response is marvelously swift between two suffering creatures, for in them the powers of intuition and of assimilation of facts and ideas are well-nigh unerring and perfect. So with the violence of the shock the Marquise's eyes were opened to the whole extent of the future danger. She was only too glad to find a pretext for her nervousness in her chronic ill-health, and willingly submitted to be overwhelmed by Mme. de Sérizy's insidious compassion.

That incident of the song caused talk and discussion which differed with the various groups. Some pitied Julie's fate, and regretted that such a remarkable woman was lost to society; others fell to wondering what the cause of her ill-health and seclusion could be.

"Well, now, my dear Ronquerolles," said the Marquis, addressing Mme. de Sérizy's brother, "you used to envy me my good fortune, and you used to blame me for my infidelities. Pshaw, you would not find much to envy in my lot if, like me, you had a pretty wife so fragile that for the past two years you might not so much as kiss her hand for fear of damaging her. Do not you encumber yourself with one of these fragile ornaments, only fit to put in a glass case, so brittle and so costly that you are always obliged to be careful of them. They tell me that you are afraid of snow or wet for that fine horse of yours; how often do you ride him?

That is just my own case. It is true that my wife gives me no ground for jealousy, but my marriage is a purely ornamental business; if you think that I am a married man, you are grossly mistaken. So there is some excuse for my unfaithfulness. I should dearly like to know what you gentlemen who laugh at me would do in my place. Not many men would be so considerate as I am. I am sure," (here he lowered his voice) "that Mme. d'Aiglemont suspects nothing. And then, of course, I have no right to complain at all; I am very well off. Only there is nothing more trying for a man who feels things than the sight of suffering in a poor creature to whom you are attached——"

"You must have a very sensitive nature, then," said M. de Ronquerolles, "for you are not often at home."

Laughter followed on the friendly epigram; but Arthur, who made one of the group, maintained a frigid imperturbability in his quality of an English gentleman who takes gravity for the very basis of his being. D'Aiglemont's eccentric confidence, no doubt, had kindled some kind of hope in Arthur, for he stood patiently awaiting an opportunity of a word with the Marquis. He had not to wait long.

"My Lord Marquis," he said, "I am unspeakably pained to see the state of Mme. d'Aiglemont's health. I do not think that you would talk jestingly about it if you knew that unless she adopts a certain course of treatment she must die miserably. If I use this language to you, it is because I am in a manner justified in using it, for I am quite certain that I can save Mme. d'Aiglemont's life and restore her to health and happiness. It is odd, no doubt, that a man of my rank should be a physician, yet nevertheless chance determined that I should study medicine. I find life dull enough here," he continued, affecting a cold selfishness to gain his ends, "it makes no difference to me whether I spend my time and travel for the benefit of a suffering fellow-creature, or waste it in Paris on some nonsense or other. It is very, very seldom that a cure is completed in these complaints, for they require constant care, time, and patience, and, above all things,

money. Travel is needed, and a punctilious following out of prescriptions, by no means unpleasant, and varied daily. Two *gentlemen*" (laying a stress on the word in its English sense) "can understand each other. I give you warning that if you accept my proposal, you shall be a judge of my conduct at every moment. I will do nothing without consulting you, without your superintendence, and I will answer for the success of my method if you will consent to follow it. Yes, unless you wish to be Mme. d'Aiglemont's husband no longer, and that before long," he added in the Marquis' ear.

The Marquis laughed. "One thing is certain—that only an Englishman could make me such an extraordinary proposal," he said. "Permit me to leave it unaccepted and unrejected. I will think it over; and my wife must be consulted first in any case."

Julie had returned to the piano. This time she sang a song from *Semiramide, Son regina, son guerriera*, and the whole room applauded, a stifled outburst of wellbred acclamation which proved that the Faubourg Saint-Germain had been roused to enthusiasm by her singing.

The evening was over. D'Aiglemont brought his wife home, and Julie saw with uneasy satisfaction that her first attempt had at once been successful. Her husband had been roused out of indifference by the part which she had played, and now he meant to honor her with such a passing fancy as he might bestow upon some opera nymph. It amused Julie that she, a virtuous married woman, should be treated thus. She tried to play with her power, but at the outset her kindness broke down once more, and she received the most terrible of all the lessons held in store for her by fate.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning Julie sat up, sombre and moody, beside her sleeping husband, in the room dimly lighted by the flickering lamp. Deep silence prevailed. Her agony of remorse had lasted near an hour; how bitter her tears had been none perhaps can realize save women who have known such an experience as hers. Only such natures as Julie's can feel her loathing for a calculated caress, the

horror of a loveless kiss, of the heart's apostasy followed by dolorous prostitution. She despised herself; she cursed marriage. She could have longed for death; perhaps if it had not been for a cry from her child, she would have sprung from the window and dashed herself upon the pavement. M. d'Aiglemont slept on peacefully at her side; his wife's hot dropping tears did not waken him.

But next morning Julie could be gay. She made a great effort to look happy, to hide, not her melancholy, as heretofore, but an insuperable loathing. From that day she no longer regarded herself as a blameless wife. Had she not been false to herself? Why should she not play a double part in the future, and display astounding depths of cunning in deceiving her husband? In her there lay a hitherto undiscovered latent depravity, lacking only opportunity, and her marriage was the cause.

Even now she had asked herself why she should struggle with love, when, with her heart and her whole nature in revolt, she gave herself to the husband whom she loved no longer. Perhaps, who knows? some piece of fallacious reasoning, some bit of special pleading, lies at the root of all sins, of all crimes. How shall society exist unless every individual of which it is composed will make the necessary sacrifices of inclination demanded by its laws? If you accept the benefits of civilized society, do you not by implication engage to observe the conditions, the conditions of its very existence? And yet, starving wretches, compelled to respect the laws of property, are not less to be pitied than women whose natural instincts and sensitiveness are turned to so many avenues of pain.

A few day after that scene of which the secret lay buried in the midnight couch, d'Aiglemont introduced Lord Grenville. Julie gave the guest a stiffly polite reception, which did credit to her powers of dissimulation. Resolutely she silenced her heart, veiled her eyes, steadied her voice, and so kept her future in her own hands. Then, when by these devices, this innate woman-craft, as it may be called, she had

discovered the full extent of the love which she inspired, Mme. d'Aiglemont welcomed the hope of a speedy cure, and no longer opposed her husband, who pressed her to accept the young doctor's offer. Yet she declined to trust herself with Lord Grenville until, after some further study of his words and manner, she could feel certain that he had sufficient generosity to endure his pain in silence. She had absolute power over him, and she had begun to abuse that power already. Was she not a woman?

Montcontour is an old manor-house built upon the sandy cliffs above the Loire, not far from the bridge where Julie's journey was interrupted in 1814. It is a picturesque, white château, with turrets covered with fine stone carving like Mechlin lace; a château such as you often see in Touraine, spick and span, ivy clad, standing among its groves of mulberry trees and vineyards, with its hollow walks, its stone balustrades, and cellars mined in the rock escarpments mirrored in the Loire. The roofs of Montcontour gleam in the sun; the whole land glows in the burning heat. Traces of the romantic charm of Spain and the south hover about the enchanting spot. The breeze brings the scent of bell flowers and golden broom, the air is soft, all about you lies a sunny land, a land which casts its dreamy spell over your soul, a land of languor and of soft desire, a fair, sweet-scented country, where pain is lulled to sleep and passion wakes. No heart is cold for long beneath its clear sky, beside its sparkling waters. One ambition dies after another, and you sink into a serene content and repose, as the sun sinks at the end of the day swathed about with purple and azure.

One warm August evening in 1821 two people were climbing the paths cut in the crags above the château, doubtless for the sake of the view from the heights above. The two were Julie and Lord Grenville, but this Julie seemed to be a new creature. The unmistakable color of health glowed in her face. Overflowing vitality had brought a light into her eyes, which sparkled through a moist film with that liquid

brightness which gives such irresistible charm to the eyes of children. She was radiant with smiles; she felt the joy of living and all the possibilities of life. From the very way in which she lifted her little feet, it was easy to see that no suffering trammeled her lightest movements; there was no heaviness nor languor in her eyes, her voice, as heretofore. Under the white silk sunshade which screened her from the hot sunlight, she looked like some young bride beneath her veil, or a maiden waiting to yield to the magical enchantments of Love.

Arthur led her with a lover's care, helping her up the pathway as if she had been a child, finding the smoothest ways, avoiding the stones for her, bidding her see glimpses of distance, or some flower beside the path, always with the unfailing goodness, the same delicate design in all that he did, the intuitive sense of this woman's wellbeing seemed to be innate in him, and as much, nay, perhaps more, a part of his being as the pulse of his own life.

The patient and her doctor went step for step. There was nothing strange for them in a sympathy which seemed to have existed since the day when first they walked together. One will swayed them both; they stopped as their senses received the same impression; every word and every glance told of the same thought in either mind. They had climbed up through the vineyards, and now they turned to sit on one of the long white stones, quarried out of the caves in the hillside; but Julie stood awhile gazing out over the landscape.

"What a beautiful country!" she cried. "Let us put up a tent and live here. Victor, Victor, do come up here!"

M. d'Aiglemont answered by a halloo from below. He did not, however, hurry himself, merely giving his wife a glance from time to time when the windings of the path gave him a glimpse of her. Julie breathed the air with delight. She looked up at Arthur, giving him one of those subtle glances in which a clever woman can put the whole of her thought.

"Ah, I should like to live here always," she said. "Would it be possible to tire of this beautiful valley?—What is the picturesque river called, do you know?"

"That is the Cise."

"The Cise," she repeated. "And all this country below, before us?"

"Those are the low hills above the Cher."

"And away to the right? Ah, that is Tours. Only see how fine the cathedral towers look in the distance."

She was silent, and let fall the hand which she had stretched out towards the view upon Arthur's. Both admired the wide landscape made up of so much blended beauty. Neither of them spoke. The murmuring voice of the river, the pure air, and the cloudless heaven were all in tune with their thronging thoughts and their youth and the love in their hearts.

"Oh! *mon Dieu,* how I love this country!" Julie continued, with growing and ingenuous enthusiasm. "You lived here for a long while, did you not?" she added after a pause.

A thrill ran through Lord Grenville at her words.

"It was down there," he said, in a melancholy voice, indicating as he spoke a cluster of walnut trees by the roadside, "that I, a prisoner, saw you for the first time."

"Yes, but even at that time I felt very sad. This country looked wild to me then, but now——" She broke off, and Lord Grenville did not dare to look at her.

"All this pleasure I owe to you," Julie began at last, after a long silence. "Only the living can feel the joy of life, and until now have I not been dead to it all? You have given me more than health, you have made me feel all its worth——"

Women have an inimitable talent for giving utterance to strong feelings in colorless words; a woman's eloquence lies in tone and gesture, manner and glance. Lord Grenville hid his face in his hands, for his tears filled his eyes. This was Julie's first word of thanks since they left Paris a year ago.

For a whole year he had watched over the Marquise, putting his whole self into the task. D'Aiglemont seconding him, he had taken her first to Aix, then to la Rochelle, to be near the sea. From moment to moment he had watched the changes worked in Julie's shattered constitution by his wise and simple

prescriptions. He had cultivated her health as an enthusiastic gardener might cultivate a rare flower. Yet, to all appearance, the Marquise had quietly accepted Arthur's skill and care with the egoism of a spoiled Parisienne, or like a courtesan who has no idea of the cost of things, nor of the worth of a man, and judges of both by their comparative usefulness to her.

The influence of places upon us is a fact worth remarking. If melancholy comes over us by the margin of a great water, another indelible law of our nature so orders it that the mountains exercise a purifying influence upon our feelings, and among the hills passion gains in depth by all that it apparently loses in vivacity. Perhaps it was the sight of the wide country by the Loire, the height of the fair sloping hillside on which the lovers sat, that induced the calm bliss of the moment when the whole extent of the passion that lies beneath a few insignificant-sounding words is divined for the first time with a delicious sense of happiness.

Julie had scarcely spoken the words which had moved Lord Grenville so deeply, when a caressing breeze ruffled the treetops and filled the air with coolness from the river; a few clouds crossed the sky, and the soft cloud-shadows brought out all the beauty of the fair land below.

Julie turned away her head, lest Arthur should see the tears which she succeeded in repressing; his emotion had spread at once to her. She dried her eyes, but she dared not raise them lest he should read the excess of joy in a glance. Her woman's instinct told her that during this hour of danger she must hide her love in the depths of her heart. Yet silence might prove equally dangerous, and Julie saw that Lord Grenville was unable to utter a word. She went on, therefore, in a gentle voice:

"You are touched by what I have said. Perhaps such a quick outburst of feeling is the way in which a gracious and kind nature like yours reverses a mistaken judgment. You must have thought me ungrateful when I was cold and reserved, or cynical and hard, all through the journey which, fortunately, is very near its end. I should not have been

worthy of your care if I had been unable to appreciate it. I have forgotten nothing. Alas! I shall forget nothing, not the anxious way in which you watched over me as a mother watches over her child, nor, and above all else, the noble confidence of our life as brother and sister, the delicacy of your conduct—winning charms, against which we women are defenceless. My lord, it is out of my power to make you a return——"

At those words Julie hastily moved further away, and Lord Grenville made no attempt to detain her. She went to a rock not far away, and there sat motionless. What either felt remained a secret known to each alone; doubtless they wept in silence. The singing of the birds about them, so blithe, so overflowing with tenderness at sunset time, could only increase the storm of passion which had driven them apart. Nature took up their story for them, and found a language for the love of which they did not dare to speak.

"And now, my lord," said Julie, and she came and stood before Arthur with a great dignity, which allowed her to take his hand in hers. "I am going to ask you to hallow and purify the life which you have given back to me. Here, we will part. I know," she added, as she saw how white his face grew, "I know that I am repaying you for your devotion by requiring of you a sacrifice even greater than any which you have hitherto made for me, sacrifices so great that they should receive some better recompense than this. . . . But it must be. . . . You must not stay in France. By laying this command upon you, do I not give you rights which shall be held sacred?" she added, holding his hand against her beating heart.

"Yes," said Arthur, and he rose.

He looked in the direction of d'Aiglemont, who appeared on the opposite side of one of the hollow walks with the child in his arms. He had scrambled up on the balustrade by the château that little Hélène might jump down.

"Julie, I will not say a word of my love; we understand each other too well. Deeply and carefully though I have

hidden the pleasures of my heart, you have shared them all. I feel it, I know it, I see it. And now, at this moment, as I receive this delicious proof of the constant sympathy of our hearts, I must go. . . . Cunning schemes for getting rid of him have crossed my mind too often; the temptation might be irresistible if I stayed with you."

"I had the same thought," she said, a look of pained surprise in her troubled face.

Yet in her tone and involuntary shudder there was such virtue, such certainty of herself, won in many a hard-fought battle with a love that spoke in Julie's tones and involuntary gestures, that Lord Grenville stood thrilled with admiration of her. The mere shadow of a crime had been dispelled from that clear conscience. The religious sentiment enthroned on the fair forehead could not but drive away the evil thoughts that arise unbidden, engendered by our imperfect nature, thoughts which make us aware of the grandeur and the perils of human destiny.

"And then," she said, "I should have drawn down your scorn upon me, and——I should have been saved," she added, and her eyes fell. "To be lowered in your eyes, what is that but death?"

For a moment the two heroic lovers were silent, choking down their sorrow. Good or ill, it seemed that their thoughts were loyally one, and the joys in the depths of their heart were no more experiences apart than the pain which they strove most anxiously to hide.

"I have no right to complain," she said after a while, "my misery is of my own making," and she raised her tear-filled eyes to the sky.

"Perhaps you don't remember it, but that is the place where we met each other for the first time," shouted the General from below, and he waved his hand towards the distance. "There, down yonder, near those poplars!"

The Englishman nodded abruptly by way of answer.

"So I was bound to die young and to know no happiness," Julie continued. "Yes, do not think that I live. Sorrow

is just as fatal as the dreadful disease which you have cured. I do not think that I am to blame. No. My love is stronger than I am, and eternal; but all unconsciously it grew in me; and I will not be guilty through my love. Nevertheless, though I shall be faithful to my conscience as a wife, to my duties as a mother, I will be no less faithful to the instincts of my heart. Hear me," she cried in an unsteady voice, "henceforth I belong to *him* no longer."

By a gesture, dreadful to see in its undisguised loathing, she indicated her husband.

"The social code demands that I should make his existence happy," she continued. "I will obey, I will be his servant, my devotion to him shall be boundless; but from to-day I am a widow. I will neither be a prostitute in my own eyes nor in those of the world. If I do not belong to M. d'Aiglemont, I will never belong to another. You shall have nothing, nothing save this which you have wrung from me. This is the doom which I have passed upon myself," she said, looking proudly at him. "And now, know this—if you give way to a single criminal thought, M. d'Aiglemont's widow will enter a convent in Spain or Italy. By an evil chance we have spoken of our love; perhaps that confession was bound to come; but our hearts must never vibrate again like this. To-morrow you will receive a letter from England, and we shall part, and never see each other again."

The effort had exhausted all Julie's strength. She felt her knees trembling, and a feeling of deathly cold came over her. Obeying a woman's instinct, she sat down, lest she should sink into Arthur's arms.

"Julie!" cried Lord Grenville.

The sharp cry rang through the air like a crack of thunder. Till then he could not speak; now, all the words which the dumb lover could not utter gathered themselves in that heart-rending appeal.

"Well, what is wrong with her?" asked the General, who had hurried up at that cry, and now suddenly confronted the two.

"Nothing serious," said Julie, with that wonderful self-possession which a woman's quick-wittedness usually brings to her aid when it is most called for. "The chill, damp air under the walnut tree made me feel quite faint just now, and that must have alarmed this doctor of mine. Does he not look on me as a very nearly finished work of art? He was startled, I suppose, by the idea of seeing it destroyed." With ostentatious coolness she took Lord Grenville's arm, smiled at her husband, took a last look at the landscape, and went down the pathway, drawing her traveling companion with her.

"This certainly is the grandest view that we have seen," she said; "I shall never forget it. Just look, Victor, what distance, what an expanse of country, and what variety in it! I have fallen in love with this landscape."

Her laughter was almost hysterical, but to her husband it sounded natural. She sprang gaily down into the hollow pathway and vanished.

"What?" she cried, when they had left M. d'Aiglemont far behind. "So soon? Is it so soon? Another moment, and we can neither of us be ourselves; we shall never be ourselves again, our life is over, in short——"

"Let us go slowly," said Lord Grenville, "the carriages are still some way off, and if we may put words into our glances, our hearts may live a little longer."

They went along the footpath by the river in the late evening light, almost in silence; such vague words as they uttered, low as the murmur of the Loire, stirred their souls to the depths. Just as the sun sank, a last red gleam from the sky fell over them; it was like a mournful symbol of their ill-starred love.

The General, much put out because the carriage was not at the spot where they left it, followed and outstripped the pair without interrupting their converse. Lord Grenville's high-minded and delicate behavior throughout the journey had completely dispelled the Marquis' suspicions. For some time past he had left his wife in freedom, reposing confidence in the noble amateur's Punic faith. Arthur and Julie walked

on together in the close and painful communion of two hearts laid waste.

So short a while ago as they climbed the cliffs at Montcontour, there had been a vague hope in either mind, an uneasy joy for which they dared not account to themselves; but now as they came along the pathway by the river, they pulled down the frail structure of imaginings, the child's card-castle, on which neither of them had dared to breathe. That hope was over.

That very evening Lord Grenville left them. His last look at Julie made it miserably plain that since the moment when sympathy revealed the full extent of a tyrannous passion, he did well to mistrust himself.

The next morning, M. d'Aiglemont and his wife took their places in the carriage without their traveling companion, and were whirled swiftly along the road to Blois. The Marquise was constantly put in mind of the journey made in 1814, when as yet she knew nothing of love, and had been almost ready to curse it for its persistency. Countless forgotten impressions were revived. The heart has its own memory. A woman who cannot recollect the most important great events will recollect through a lifetime things which appealed to her feelings; and Julie d'Aiglemont found all the most trifling details of that journey laid up in her mind. It was pleasant to her to recall its little incidents as they occurred to her one by one; there were points in the road when she could even remember the thoughts that passed through her mind when she saw them first.

Victor had fallen violently in love with his wife since she had recovered the freshness of her youth and all her beauty, and now he pressed close to her side like a lover. Once he tried to put his arm round her, but she gently disengaged herself, finding some excuse or other for evading the harmless caress. In a little while she shrank from the close contact with Victor, the sensation of warmth communicated by their position. She tried to take the unoccupied place opposite, but Victor gallantly resigned the back seat to her. For this at-

tention she thanked him with a sigh, whereupon he forgot himself, and the Don Juan of the garrison construed his wife's melancholy to his own advantage, so that at the end of the day she was compelled to speak with a firmness which impressed him.

"You have all but killed me, dear, once already, as you know," said she. "If I were still an inexperienced girl, I might begin to sacrifice myself afresh; but I am a mother, I have a daughter to bring up, and I owe as much to her as to you. Let us resign ourselves to a misfortune which affects us both alike. You are the less to be pitied. Have you not, as it is, found consolations which duty and the honor of both, and (stronger still) which Nature forbids to me? Stay," she added, "you carelessly left three letters from Mme. de Sérizy in a drawer; here they are. My silence about this matter should make it plain to you that in me you have a wife who has plenty of indulgence and does not exact from you the sacrifices prescribed by the law. But I have thought enough to see that the rôles of husband and wife are quite different, and that the wife alone is predestined to misfortune. My virtue is based upon firmly fixed and definite principles. I shall live blamelessly, but let me live."

The Marquis was taken aback by a logic which women grasp with the clear insight of love, and overawed by a certain dignity natural to them at such crises. Julie's instinctive repugnance for all that jarred upon her love and the instincts of her heart is one of the fairest qualities of woman, and springs perhaps from a natural virtue which neither laws nor civilization can silence. And who shall dare to blame women? If a woman can silence the exclusive sentiment which bids her "forsake all other" for the man whom she loves, what is she but a priest who has lost his faith? If a rigid mind here and there condemns Julie for a sort of compromise between love and wifely duty, impassioned souls will lay it to her charge as a crime. To be thus blamed by both sides shows one of two things very clearly—that misery necessarily follows in the train of broken laws, or else that there

are deplorable flaws in the institutions upon which society in Europe is based.

Two years went by. M. and Mme. d'Aiglemont went their separate ways, leading their life in the world, meeting each other more frequently abroad than at home, a refinement upon divorce, in which many a marriage in the great world is apt to end.

One evening, strange to say, found husband and wife in their own drawing-room. Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining at home with a friend, and the General, who almost invariably dined in town, had not gone out for once.

"There is a pleasant time in store for you, *Madame la Marquise,*" said M. d'Aiglemont, setting his coffee cup down upon the table. He looked at the guest, Mme. de Wimphen, and half-pettishly, half-mischievously added, "I am starting off for several days' sport with the Master of the Hounds. For a whole week, at any rate, you will be a widow in good earnest; just what you wish for, I suppose.—Guillaume," he said to the servant who entered, "tell them to put the horses in."

Mme. de Wimphen was the friend to whom Julie had begun the letter upon her marriage. The glances exchanged by the two women said plainly that in her Julie had found an intimate friend, an indulgent and invaluable confidante. Mme. de Wimphen's marriage had been a very happy one. Perhaps it was her own happiness which secured her devotion to Julie's unhappy life, for under such circumstances, dissimilarity of destiny is nearly always a strong bond of union.

"Is the hunting season not over yet?" asked Julie, with an indifferent glance at her husband.

"The Master of the Hounds comes when and where he pleases, madame. We are going boar-hunting in the Royal Forest."

"Take care that no accident happens to you."

"Accidents are usually unforeseen," he said, smiling.

"The carriage is ready, my Lord Marquis," said the servant.

"Madame, if I should fall a victim to the boar——" he continued, with a suppliant air.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mme. de Wimphen.

"Come, come," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, turning to her husband; smiling at her friend as if to say, "You will soon see."

Julie held up her head; but as her husband came close to her, she swerved at the last, so that his kiss fell not on her throat, but on the broad frill about it.

"You will be my witness before heaven now that I need a firman to obtain this little grace of her," said the Marquis, addressing Mme. de Wimphen. "This is how this wife of mine understands love. She has brought me to this pass, by what trickery I am at a loss to know. . . . A pleasant time to you!" and he went.

"But your poor husband is really very good-natured," cried Louisa de Wimphen, when the two women were alone together. "He loves you."

"Oh! not another syllable after that last word. The name I bear makes me shudder——"

"Yes, but Victor obeys you implicitly," said Louisa.

"His obedience is founded in part upon the great esteem which I have inspired in him. As far as outward things go, I am a model wife. I make his house pleasant to him; I shut my eyes to his intrigues; I touch not a penny of his fortune. He is free to squander the interest exactly as he pleases; I only stipulate that he shall not touch the principal. At this price I have peace. He neither explains nor attempts to explain my life. But though my husband is guided by me, that does not say that I have nothing to fear from his character. I am a bear leader who daily trembles lest the muzzle should give way at last. If Victor once took it into his head that I had forfeited my right to his esteem, what would happen next I dare not think; for he is violent, full of personal pride, and vain above all things. While his wits are not keen enough to enable him to behave discreetly at a delicate crisis when his lowest passions are involved, his character is weak, and he

would very likely kill me provisionally even if he died of remorse next day. But there is no fear of that fatal good fortune."

A brief pause followed. Both women were thinking of the real cause of this state of affairs. Julie gave Louisa a glance which revealed her thoughts.

"I have been cruelly obeyed," she cried. "Yet I never forbade him to write to me. Oh! *he* has forgotten me, and he is right. If his life had been spoiled, it would have been too tragical; one life is enough, is it not? Would you believe it, dear; I read English newspapers simply to see his name in print. But he has not yet taken his seat in the House of Lords."

"So you know English?"

"Did I not tell you?—Yes, I learned."

"Poor little one!" cried Louisa, grasping Julie's hand in hers. "How can you still live?"

"That is the secret," said the Marquise, with an involuntary gesture almost childlike in its simplicity. "Listen, I take laudanum. That duchess in London suggested the idea; you know the story, Maturin made use of it in one of his novels. My drops are very weak, but I sleep; I am only awake for seven hours in the day, and those hours I spend with my child."

Louisa gazed into the fire. The full extent of her friend's misery was opening out before her for the first time, and she dared not look into her face.

"Keep my secret, Louisa," said Julie, after a moment's silence.

Just as she spoke the footman brought in a letter for the Marquise.

"Ah!" she cried, and her face grew white.

"I need not ask from whom it comes," said Mme. de Wimphen, but the Marquise was reading the letter, and heeded nothing else.

Mme. de Wimphen, watching her friend, saw strong feeling wrought to the highest pitch, ecstasy of the most dangerous

kind painted on Julie's face in swift changing white and red. At length Julie flung the sheet into the fire.

"It burns like fire," she said. "Oh! my heart beats till I cannot breathe."

She rose to her feet and walked up and down. Her eyes were blazing.

"He did not leave Paris!" she cried.

Mme. de Wimphen did not dare to interrupt the words that followed, jerked-out sentences, measured by dreadful pauses in between. After every break the deep notes of her voice sank lower and lower. There was something awful about the last words.

"He has seen me, constantly, and I have not known it.—A look, taken by stealth, every day, helps him to live.—Louisa, you do not know!—He is dying.—He wants to say good-bye to me. He knows that my husband has gone away for several days. He will be here in a moment. Oh! I shall die: I am lost.—Listen, Louisa, stay with me! Two women and he will not dare—— Oh! stay with me!—*I am afraid!*"

"But my husband knows that I have been dining with you; he is sure to come for me," said Mme. de Wimphen.

"Well, then, before you go I will send *him* away. I will play the executioner for us both. Oh me! he will think that I do not love him any more—— And that letter of his! Dear, I can see those words in letters of fire."

A carriage rolled in under the archway.

"Ah!" cried the Marquise, with something like joy in her voice, "he is coming openly. He makes no mystery of it."

"Lord Grenville," announced the servant.

The Marquise stood up rigid and motionless; but at the sight of Arthur's white face, so thin and haggard, how was it possible to keep up the show of severity? Lord Grenville saw that Julie was not alone, but he controlled his fierce annoyance, and looked cool and unperturbed. Yet for the two women who knew his secret, his face, his tones, the look in his eyes had something of the power attributed to the torpedo. Their faculties were benumbed by the sharp shock of contact

with his horrible pain. The sound of his voice set Julie's heart beating so cruelly that she could not trust herself to speak; she was afraid that he would see the full extent of his power over her. Lord Grenville did not dare to look at Julie, and Mme. de Wimphen was left to sustain a conversation to which no one listened. Julie glanced at her friend with touching gratefulness in her eyes to thank her for coming to her aid.

By this time the lovers had quelled emotion into silence, and could preserve the limits laid down by duty and convention. But M. de Wimphen was announced, and as he came in the two friends exchanged glances. Both felt the difficulties of this fresh complication. It was impossible to enter into explanations with M. de Wimphen, and Louisa could not think of any sufficient pretext for asking to be left.

Julie went to her, ostensibly to wrap her up in her shawl. "I will be brave," she said, in a low voice. "He came here in the face of all the world, so what have I to fear? Yet but for you, in that first moment, when I saw how changed he looked, I should have fallen at his feet."

"Well, Arthur, you have broken your promise to me," she said, in a faltering voice, when she returned. Lord Grenville did not venture to take the seat upon the sofa by her side.

"I could not resist the pleasure of hearing your voice, of being near you. The thought of it came to be a sort of madness, a delirious frenzy. I am no longer master of myself. I have taken myself to task; it is no use, I am too weak, I ought to die. But to die without seeing you, without having heard the rustle of your dress, or felt your tears. What a death!"

He moved further away from her; but in his hasty uprising a pistol fell out of his pocket. The Marquise looked down blankly at the weapon; all passion, all expression had died out of her eyes. Lord Grenville stooped for the thing, raging inwardly over an accident which seemed like a piece of love-sick strategy.

"Arthur!"

"Madame," he said, looking down, "I came here in utter desperation; I meant——" he broke off.

"You meant to die by your own hand here in my house!"

"Not alone!" he said in a low voice.

"Not alone! My husband, perhaps——?"

"No, no," he cried in a choking voice. "Reassure yourself," he continued, "I have quite given up my deadly purpose. As soon as I came in, as soon as I saw you, I felt that I was strong enough to suffer in silence, and to die alone."

Julie sprang up, and flung herself into his arms. Through her sobbing he caught a few passionate words, "To know happiness, and then to die.—Yes, let it be so."

All Julie's story was summed up in that cry from the depths; it was the summons of nature and of love at which women without a religion surrender. With the fierce energy of unhoped-for joy, Arthur caught her up and carried her to the sofa; but in a moment she tore herself from her lover's arms, looked at him with a fixed despairing gaze, took his hand, snatched up a candle, and drew him into her room. When they stood by the cot where Hélène lay sleeping, she put the curtains softly aside, shading the candle with her hand, lest the light should dazzle the half-closed eyes beneath the transparent lids. Hélène lay smiling in her sleep, with her arms outstretched on the coverlet. Julie glanced from her child to Arthur's face. That look told him all.

"We may leave a husband, even though he loves us: a man is strong; he has consolations.—We may defy the world and its laws. But a motherless child!"—all these thoughts, and a thousand others more moving still, found language in that glance.

"We can take her with us," muttered he; "I will love her dearly."

"Mamma!" cried little Hélène, now awake. Julie burst into tears. Lord Grenville sat down and folded his arms in gloomy silence.

"Mamma!" At the sweet childish name, so many nobler feelings, so many irresistible yearnings awoke, that for a moment love was effaced by the all-powerful instinct of motherhood; the mother triumphed over the woman in Julie, and Lord Grenville could not hold out, he was defeated by Julie's tears.

Just at that moment a door was flung noisily open. "Madame d'Aiglemont, are you hereabouts?" called a voice which rang like a crack of thunder through the hearts of the two lovers. The Marquis had come home.

Before Julie could recover her presence of mind, her husband was on the way to the door of her room which opened into his. Luckily, at a sign, Lord Grenville escaped into the dressing-closet, and she hastily shut the door upon him.

"Well, my lady, here am I," said Victor, "the hunting party did not come off. I am just going to bed."

"Good-night, so am I. So go and leave me to undress."

"You are very cross to-night, Madame la Marquise."

The General returned to his room, Julie went with him to the door and shut it. Then she sprang to the dressing-closet to release Arthur. All her presence of mind returned; she bethought herself that it was quite natural that her sometime doctor should pay her a visit; she might have left him in the drawing-room while she put her little girl to bed. She was about to tell him, under her breath, to go back to the drawing-room, and had opened the door. Then she shrieked aloud. Lord Grenville's fingers had been caught and crushed in the door.

"Well, what is it?" demanded her husband.

"Oh! nothing, nothing, I have just pricked my finger with a pin."

The General's door opened at once. Julie imagined that the irruption was due to a sudden concern for her, and cursed a solicitude in which love had no part. She had barely time to close the dressing-closet, and Lord Grenville had not extricated his hand. The General did, in fact, appear, but his wife had mistaken his motives; his apprehensions were entirely on his own account.

"Can you lend me a bandana handkerchief? That stupid fool Charles leaves me without a single one. In the early days you used to bother me with looking after me so carefully. Ah, well, the honeymoon did not last very long for me, nor yet for my cravats. Nowadays I am given over to the secular arm, in the shape of servants who do not care one jack straw for what I say."

"There! There is a bandana for you. Did you go into the drawing-room?"

"No."

"Oh! you might perhaps have been in time to see Lord Grenville.

"Is he in Paris?"

"It seems so."

"Oh! I will go at once. The good doctor."

"But he will have gone by now!" exclaimed Julie.

The Marquis, standing in the middle of the room, was tying the handkerchief over his head. He looked complacently at himself in the glass.

"What has become of the servants is more than I know," he remarked. "I have rung the bell three times for Charles, and he has not answered it. And your maid is not here either. Ring for her. I should like another blanket on my bed to-night."

"Pauline is out," the Marquise said drily.

"What, at midnight!" exclaimed the General.

"I gave her leave to go to the Opéra."

"That is funny!" returned her husband, continuing to undress. "I thought I saw her coming upstairs."

"She has come in then, of course," said Julie, with assumed impatience, and to allay any possible suspicion on her husband's part she pretended to ring the bell.

The whole history of that night has never been known, but no doubt it was as simple and as tragically commonplace as the domestic incidents that preceded it.

Next day the Marquise d'Aiglemont took to her bed, nor did she leave it for some days.

"What can have happened in your family so extraordinary that every one is talking about your wife?" asked M. de Ronquerolles of M. d'Aiglemont a short time after that night of catastrophes.

"Take my advice and remain a bachelor," said d'Aiglemont. "The curtains of Hélène's cot caught fire, and gave my wife such a shock that it will be a twelvemonth before she gets over it; so the doctor says. You marry a pretty wife, and her looks fall off; you marry a girl in blooming health, and she turns into an invalid. You think she has a passionate temperament, and find her cold, or else under her apparent coldness there lurks a nature so passionate that she is the death of you, or she dishonors your name. Sometimes the meekest of them will turn out crotchety, though the crotchety ones never grow any sweeter. Sometimes the mere child, so simple and silly at first, will develop an iron will to thwart you and the ingenuity of a fiend. I am tired of marriage."

"Or of your wife?"

"That would be difficult. By-the-by, do you feel inclined to go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin with me to attend Lord Grenville's funeral?"

"A singular way of spending time.—Is it really known how he came by his death?" added Ronquerolles.

"His man says that he spent a whole night sitting on somebody's window sill to save some woman's character, and it has been infernally cold lately."

"Such devotion would be highly creditable to one of us old stagers; but Lord Grenville was a youngster and—an Englishman. Englishmen never can do anything like anybody else."

"Pooh!" returned d'Aiglemont, "these heroic exploits all depend upon the woman in the case, and it certainly was not for one that I know, that poor Arthur came by his death."

II.

A HIDDEN GRIEF

Between the Seine and the little river Loing lies a wide flat country, skirted on the one side by the Forest of Fontainebleau, and marked out as to its southern limits by the towns of Moret, Montereau, and Nemours. It is a dreary country; little knolls of hills appear only at rare intervals, and a coppice here and there among the fields affords cover for game; and beyond, upon every side, stretches the endless gray or yellowish horizon peculiar to Beauce, Sologne, and Berri.

In the very centre of the plain, at equal distances from Moret and Montereau, the traveler passes the old château of Saint-Lange, standing amid surroundings which lack neither dignity nor stateliness. There are magnificent avenues of elm-trees, great gardens encircled by the moat, and a circumference of walls about a huge manorial pile which represents the profits of the *maltôte*, the gains of farmers-general, legalized malversation, or the vast fortunes of great houses now brought low beneath the hammer of the Civil Code.

Should any artist or dreamer of dreams chance to stray along the roads full of deep ruts, or over the heavy land which secures the place against intrusion, he will wonder how it happened that this romantic old place was set down in a savanna of corn-land, a desert of chalk, and sand, and marl, where gaiety dies away, and melancholy is a natural product of the soil. The voiceless solitude, the monotonous horizon line which weigh upon the spirits are negative beauties, which only suit with sorrow that refuses to be comforted.

Hither, at the close of the year 1820, came a woman, still young, well known in Paris for her charm, her fair face, and her wit; and to the immense astonishment of the little village a mile away, this woman of high rank and corresponding fortune took up her abode at Saint-Lange.

From time immemorial, farmers and laborers had seen no gentry at the château. The estate, considerable though it was, had been left in charge of a land-steward and the house to the old servants. Wherefore the appearance of the lady of the manor caused a kind of sensation in the district.

A group had gathered in the yard of the wretched little wineshop at the end of the village (where the road forks to Nemours and Moret) to see the carriage pass. It went by slowly, for the Marquise had come from Paris with her own horses, and those on the lookout had ample opportunity of observing a waiting-maid, who sat with her back to the horses holding a little girl, with a somewhat dreamy look, upon her knee. The child's mother lay back in the carriage; she looked like a dying woman sent out into country air by her doctors as a last resource. Village politicians were by no means pleased to see the young, delicate, downcast face; they had hoped that the new arrival at Saint-Lange would bring some life and stir into the neighborhood, and clearly any sort of stir or movement must be distasteful to the suffering invalid in the traveling carriage.

That evening, when the notables of Saint-Lange were drinking in the private room of the wineshop, the longest head among them declared that such depression could admit of but one construction—the Marquise was ruined. His lordship the Marquis was away in Spain with the Duc d'Angoulême (so they said in the papers), and beyond a doubt her ladyship had come to Saint-Lange to retrench after a run of ill-luck on the Bourse. The Marquis was one of the greatest gamblers on the face of the globe. Perhaps the estate would be cut up and sold in little lots. There would be some good strokes of business to be made in that case, and it behooved everybody to count up his cash, unearth his savings and to see how he stood, so as to secure his share of the spoil of Saint-Lange.

So fair did this future seem, that the village worthies, dying to know whether it was founded on fact, began to think of ways of getting at the truth through the servants at the

château. None of these, however, could throw any light on the calamity which had brought their mistress into the country at the beginning of winter, and to the old château of Saint-Lange of all places, when she might have taken her choice of cheerful country-houses famous for their beautiful gardens.

His worship the mayor called to pay his respects; but he did not see the lady. Then the land-steward tried with no better success.

Madame la Marquise kept her room, only leaving it, while it was set in order, for the small adjoining drawing-room, where she dined; if, indeed, to sit down to a table, to look with disgust at the dishes, and take the precise amount of nourishment required to prevent death from sheer starvation, can be called dining. The meal over, she returned at once to the old-fashioned low chair, in which she had sat since the morning, in the embrasure of the one window that lighted her room.

Her little girl she only saw for a few minutes daily, during the dismal dinner, and even for that short time she seemed scarcely able to bear the child's presence. Surely nothing but the most unheard-of anguish could have extinguished a mother's love so early.

None of the servants were suffered to come near, her own woman was the one creature whom she liked to have about her; the château must be perfectly quiet, the child must play at the other end of the house. The slightest sound had grown so intolerable, that any human voice, even the voice of her own child, jarred upon her.

At first the whole countryside was deeply interested in these eccentricities; but time passed on, every possible hypothesis had been advanced to account for them, and the peasants and dwellers in the little country towns thought no more of the invalid lady.

So the Marquise was left to herself. She might live on, perfectly silent, amid the silence which she herself had created; there was nothing to draw her forth from the tapestried chamber where her grandmother had died, whither

she herself had come that she might die, gently, without witnesses, without importunate solicitude, without suffering from the insincere demonstrations of egoism masquerading as affection, which double the agony of death in great cities.

She was twenty-six years old. At that age, with plenty of romantic illusions still left, the mind loves to dwell on the thought of death when death seems to come as a friend. But with youth, death is coy, coming up close only to go away, showing himself and hiding again, till youth has time to fall out of love with him during this dalliance. There is that uncertainty too that hangs over death's to-morrow. Youth plunges back into the world of living men, there to find the pain more pitiless than death, that does not wait to strike.

This woman who refused to live was to know the bitterness of these reprieves in the depths of her loneliness; in moral agony, which death would not come to end, she was to serve a terrible apprenticeship to the egoism which must take the bloom from her heart and break her in to the life of the world.

This harsh and sorry teaching is the usual outcome of our early sorrows. For the first, and perhaps for the last time in her life, the Marquise d'Aiglemont was in very truth suffering. And, indeed, would it not be an error to suppose that the same sentiment can be reproduced in us? Once develop the power to feel, is it not always there in the depths of our nature? The accidents of life may lull or awaken it, but there it is, of necessity modifying the self, its abiding place. Hence, every sensation should have its great day once and for all, its first day of storm, be it long or short. Hence, likewise, pain, the most abiding of our sensations, could be keenly felt only at its first irruption, its intensity diminishing with every subsequent paroxysm, either because we grow accustomed to these crises, or perhaps because a natural instinct of self-preservation asserts itself, and opposes to the destroying force of anguish an equal but passive force of inertia.

Yet of all kinds of suffering, to which does the name of anguish belong? For the loss of parents, Nature has in a

manner prepared us; physical suffering, again, is an evil which passes over us and is gone; it lays no hold upon the soul; if it persists, it ceases to be an evil, it is death. The young mother loses her firstborn, but wedded love ere long gives her a successor. This grief, too, is transient. After all, these, and many other troubles like unto them, are in some sort wounds and bruises; they do not sap the springs of vitality, and only a succession of such blows can crush in us the instinct that seeks happiness. Great pain, therefore, pain that arises to anguish, should be suffering so deadly, that past, present, and future are alike included in its grip, and no part of life is left sound and whole. Never afterwards can we think the same thoughts as before. Anguish engraves itself in ineffaceable characters on mouth and brow; it passes through us, destroying or relaxing the springs that vibrate to enjoyment, leaving behind in the soul the seeds of a disgust for all things in this world.

Yet, again, to be measureless, to weigh like this upon body and soul, the trouble should befall when soul and body have just come to their full strength, and smite down a heart that beats high with life. Then it is that great scars are made. Terrible is the anguish. None, it may be, can issue from this soul-sickness without undergoing some dramatic change. Those who survive it, those who remain on earth, return to the world to wear an actor's countenance and to play an actor's part. They know the side-scenes where actors may retire to calculate chances, shed their tears, or pass their jests. Life holds no inscrutable dark places for those who have passed through this ordeal; their judgments are Rhadamanthine.

For young women of the Marquise d'Aiglemont's age, this first, this most poignant pain of all, is always referable to the same cause. A woman, especially if she is a young woman, greatly beautiful, and by nature great, never fails to stake her whole life as instinct and sentiment and society all unite to bid her. Suppose that that life fails her, suppose that she still lives on, she cannot but endure the most cruel pangs,

inasmuch as a first love is the loveliest of all. How comes it that this catastrophe has found no painter, no poet? And yet, can it be painted? Can it be sung? No; for the anguish arising from it eludes analysis and defies the colors of art. And more than this, such pain is never confessed. To console the sufferer, you must be able to divine the past which she hugs in bitterness to her soul like a remorse; it is like an avalanche in a valley; it laid all waste before it found a permanent resting-place.

The Marquise was suffering from this anguish, which will for long remain unknown, because the whole world condemns it, while sentiment cherishes it, and the conscience of a true woman justifies her in it. It is with such pain as with children steadily disowned of life, and therefore bound more closely to the mother's heart than other children more bounteously endowed. Never, perhaps, was the awful catastrophe in which the whole world without dies for us, so deadly, so complete, so cruelly aggravated by circumstance as it had been for the Marquise. The man whom she had loved was young and generous; in obedience to the laws of the world, she had refused herself to his love, and he had died to save a woman's honor, as the world calls it. To whom could she speak of her misery? Her tears would be an offence against her husband, the origin of the tragedy. By all laws written and unwritten she was bound over to silence. A woman would have enjoyed the story; a man would have schemed for his own benefit. No; such grief as hers can only weep freely in solitude and in loneliness; she must consume her pain or be consumed by it; die or kill something within her—her conscience, it may be.

Day after day she sat gazing at the flat horizon. It lay out before her like her own life to come. There was nothing to discover, nothing to hope. The whole of it could be seen at a glance. It was the visible presentment in the outward world of the chill sense of desolation which was gnawing restlessly at her heart. The misty mornings, the pale, bright sky, the low clouds scudding under the gray dome of heaven,

fitted with the moods of her soul-sickness. Her heart did not contract, was neither more nor less seared, rather it seemed as if her youth, in its full blossom, was slowly turned to stone by an anguish intolerable because it was barren. She suffered through herself and for herself. How could it end save in self-absorption? Ugly torturing thoughts probed her conscience. Candid self-examination pronounced that she was double, there were two selves within her; a woman who felt and a woman who thought; a self that suffered and a self that would fain suffer no longer. Her mind traveled back to the joys of childish days; they had gone by, and she had never known how happy they were. Scenes crowded up in her memory as in a bright mirror glass, to demonstrate the deception of a marriage which, all that it should be in the eyes of the world, was in reality so wretched. What had the delicate pride of young womanhood done for her—the bliss foregone, the sacrifices made to the world? Everything in her expressed love, awaited love; her movements still were full of perfect grace; her smile, her charm, were hers as before; why? she asked herself. The sense of her own youth and physical loveliness no more affected her than some meaningless reiterated sound. Her very beauty had grown intolerable to her as a useless thing. She shrank aghast from the thought that through the rest of life she must remain an incomplete creature; had not the inner self lost its power of receiving impressions with that zest, that exquisite sense of freshness which is the spring of so much of life's gladness? The impressions of the future would for the most part be effaced as soon as received, and many of the thoughts which once would have moved her now would move her no more.

After the childhood of the creature dawns the childhood of the heart; but this second infancy was over, her lover had taken it down with him into the grave. The longings of youth remained; she was young yet; but the completeness of youth was gone, and with that lost completeness the whole value and savor of life had diminished somewhat. Should she

not always bear within her the seeds of sadness and mistrust, ready to grow up and rob emotion of its springtide of fervor? Conscious she must always be that nothing could give her now the happiness so longed for, that seemed so fair in her dreams. The fire from heaven that sheds abroad its light in the heart, in the dawn of love, had been quenched in tears, the first real tears which she had shed; henceforth she must always suffer, because it was no longer in her power to be what once she might have been. This is a belief which turns us in aversion and bitterness of spirit from any proffered new delight.

Julie had come to look at life from the point of view of age about to die. Young though she felt, the heavy weight of joyless days had fallen upon her, and left her broken-spirited and old before her time. With a despairing cry, she asked the world what it could give her in exchange for the love now lost, by which she had lived. She asked herself whether in that vanished love, so chaste and pure, her will had not been more criminal than her deeds, and chose to believe herself guilty; partly to affront the world, partly for her own consolation, in that she had missed the close union of body and soul, which diminishes the pain of the one who is left behind by the knowledge that once it has known and given joy to the full, and retains within itself the impress of that which is no more.

Something of the mortification of the actress cheated of her part mingled with the pain which thrilled through every fibre of her heart and brain. Her nature had been thwarted, her vanity wounded, her woman's generosity cheated of self-sacrifice. Then, when she had raised all these questions, set vibrating all the springs in those different phases of being which we distinguish as social, moral, and physical, her energies were so far exhausted and relaxed that she was powerless to grasp a single thought amid the chase of conflicting ideas.

Sometimes as the mists fell, she would throw her window open, and would stay there, motionless, breathing in unheedingly the damp earthy scent in the air, her mind to all ap-

pearance an unintelligent blank, for the ceaseless burden of sorrow humming in her brain left her deaf to earth's harmonies and insensible to the delights of thought.

One day, towards noon, when the sun shone out for a little, her maid came in without a summons.

"This is the fourth time that M. le Curé has come to see Mme. la Marquise; to-day he is so determined about it, that we did not know what to tell him."

"He has come to ask for some money for the poor, no doubt; take him twenty-five louis from me."

The woman went only to return.

"M. le Curé will not take the money, my lady; he wants to speak to you."

"Then let him come!" said Mme. d'Aiglemont, with an involuntary shrug which augured ill for the priest's reception. Evidently the lady meant to put a stop to persecution by a short and sharp method.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her mother in her early childhood; and as a natural consequence in her bringing-up, she had felt the influences of the relaxed notions which loosened the hold of religion upon France during the Revolution. Piety is a womanly virtue which women alone can really instil; and the Marquise, a child of the eighteenth century, had adopted her father's creed of philosophism, and practised no religious observances. A priest, to her way of thinking, was a civil servant of very doubtful utility. In her present position, the teaching of religion could only poison her wounds; she had, moreover, but scanty faith in the lights of country curés, and made up her mind to put this one gently but firmly in his place, and to rid herself of him, after the manner of the rich, by bestowing a benefit.

At first sight of the curé the Marquise felt no inclination to change her mind. She saw before her a stout, rotund little man, with a ruddy, wrinkled, elderly face, which awkwardly and unsuccessfully tried to smile. His bald, quadrant-shaped forehead, furrowed by intersecting lines, was too heavy for the rest of his face, which seemed to be dwarfed by it. A

fringe of scanty white hair encircled the back of his head, and almost reached his ears. Yet the priest looked as if by nature he had a genial disposition; his thick lips, his slightly curved nose, his chin, which vanished in a double fold of wrinkles,—all marked him out as a man who took cheerful views of life.

At first the Marquise saw nothing but these salient characteristics, but at the first word she was struck by the sweetness of the speaker's voice. Looking at him more closely, she saw that the eyes under the grizzled eyebrows had shed tears, and his face, turned in profile, wore so sublime an impress of sorrow, that the Marquise recognized the man in the curé.

"Madame la Marquise, the rich only come within our province when they are in trouble. It is easy to see that the troubles of a young, beautiful, and wealthy married woman, who has lost neither children nor relatives, are caused by wounds whose pangs religion alone can soothe. Your soul is in danger, madame. I am not speaking now of the hereafter which awaits us. No, I am not in the confessional. But it is my duty, is it not, to open your eyes to your future life here on earth? You will pardon an old man, will you not, for importunity which has your own happiness for its object?"

"There is no more happiness for me, monsieur. I shall soon be, as you say, in your province; but it will be for ever."

"Nay, madame. You will not die of this pain which lies heavy upon you, and can be read in your face. If you had been destined to die of it, you would not be here at Saint-Lange. A definite regret is not so deadly as hope deferred. I have known others pass through more intolerable and more awful anguish, and yet they live."

The Marquise looked incredulous.

"Madame, I know a man whose affliction was so sore that your trouble would seem to you to be light compared with his."

Perhaps the long solitary hours had begun to hang heavily; perhaps in the recesses of the Marquise's mind lay the thought that here was a friendly heart to whom she might be able

to pour out her troubles. However it was, she gave the curé a questioning glance which could not be mistaken.

"Madame," he continued, "the man of whom I tell you had but three children left of a once large family circle. He lost his parents, his daughter, and his wife, whom he dearly loved. He was left alone at last on the little farm where he had lived so happily for so long. His three sons were in the army, and each of the lads had risen in proportion to his time of service. During the Hundred Days, the oldest went into the Guard with a colonel's commission; the second was a major in the artillery; the youngest a major in a regiment of dragoons. Madame, those three boys loved their father as much as he loved them. If you but knew how careless young fellows grow of home ties when they are carried away by the current of their own lives, you would realize from this one little thing how warmly they loved the lonely old father, who only lived in and for them—never a week passed without a letter from one of the boys. But then he on his side had never been weakly indulgent, to lessen their respect for him; nor unjustly severe, to thwart their affection; nor apt to grudge sacrifices, the thing that estranges children's hearts. He had been more than a father; he had been a brother to them, and their friend.

"At last he went to Paris to bid them good-bye before they set out for Belgium; he wished to see that they had good horses and all that they needed. And so they went, and the father returned to his home again. Then the war began. He had letters from Fleurus, and again from Ligny. All went well. Then came the battle of Waterloo, and you know the rest. France was plunged into mourning; every family waited in intense anxiety for news. You may imagine, madame, how the old man waited for tidings, in anxiety that knew no peace nor rest. He used to read the gazettes; he went to the coach office every day. One evening he was told that the colonel's servant had come. The man was riding his master's horse—what need was there to ask any questions?—the colonel was dead, cut in two by a shell. Before

the evening was out the youngest son's servant arrived—the youngest had died on the eve of the battle. At midnight came a gunner with tidings of the death of the last; upon whom, in those few hours, the poor father had centered all his life. Madame, they all had fallen."

After a pause the good man controlled his feelings, and added gently:

"And their father is still living, madame. He realized that if God had left him on earth, he was bound to live on and suffer on earth; but he took refuge in the sanctuary. What could he be?"

The Marquise looked up and saw the curé's face, grown sublime in its sorrow and resignation, and waited for him to speak. When the words came, tears broke from her.

"A priest, madame; consecrated by his own tears previously shed at the foot of the altar."

Silence prevailed for a little. The Marquise and the curé looked out at the foggy landscape, as if they could see the figures of those who were no more.

"Not a priest in a city, but a simple country curé," added he.

"At Saint-Lange," she said, drying her eyes.

"Yes, madame."

Never had the majesty of grief seemed so great to Julie. The two words sank straight into her heart with the weight of an infinite sorrow. The gentle, sonorous tones troubled her heart. Ah! that full, deep voice, charged with plangent vibration, was the voice of one who had suffered indeed.

"And if I do not die, monsieur, what will become of me?" The Marquise spoke almost reverently.

"Have you not a child, madame?"

"Yes," she said stiffly.

The curé gave her such a glance as a doctor gives a patient whose life is in danger. Then he determined to do all that in him lay to combat the evil spirit into whose clutches she had fallen.

"We must live on with our sorrows—you see it yourself,

madame, and religion alone offers us real consolation. Will you permit me to come again?—to speak to you as a man who can sympathize with every trouble, a man about whom there is nothing very alarming, I think?"

"Yes, monsieur, come back again. Thank you for your thought of me."

"Very well, madame; then I shall return very shortly."

This visit relaxed the tension of soul, as it were; the heavy strain of grief and loneliness had been almost too much for the Marquise's strength. The priest's visit had left a soothing balm in her heart, his words thrilled through her with healing influence. She began to feel something of a prisoner's satisfaction, when, after he has had time to feel his utter loneliness and the weight of his chains, he hears a neighbor knocking on the wall, and welcomes the sound which brings a sense of human fellowship. Here was an unhoped-for confidant. But this feeling did not last for long. Soon she sank back into the old bitterness of spirit, saying to herself, as the prisoner might say, that a companion in misfortune could neither lighten her own bondage nor her future.

In the first visit the curé had feared to alarm the susceptibilities of self-absorbed grief, in a second interview he hoped to make some progress towards religion. He came back again two days later, and from the Marquise's welcome it was plain that she had looked forward to the visit.

"Well, Mme. la Marquise, have you given a little thought to the great mass of human suffering? Have you raised your eyes above our earth and seen the immensity of the universe? —the worlds beyond worlds which crush our vanity into insignificance, and with our vanity reduce our sorrows?"

"No, monsieur," she said; "I cannot rise to such heights, our social laws lie too heavily upon me, and rend my heart with a too poignant anguish. And laws perhaps are less cruel than the usages of the world. Ah! the world!"

"Madame, we must obey both. Law is the doctrine, and custom the practice of society."

"Obey society?" cried the Marquise, with an involuntary

shudder. "Eh! monsieur, it is the source of all our woes. God laid down no law to make us miserable; but mankind, uniting together in social life, have perverted God's work. Civilization deals harder measure to us women than nature does. Nature imposes upon us physical suffering which you have not alleviated; civilization has developed in us thoughts and feelings which you cheat continually. Nature exterminates the weak; you condemn them to live, and by so doing, consign them to a life of misery. The whole weight of the burden of marriage, an institution on which society is based, falls upon us; for the man liberty, duties for the woman. We must give up our whole lives to you, you are only bound to give us a few moments of yours. A man, in fact, makes a choice, while we blindly submit. Oh, monsieur, to you I can speak freely. Marriage, in these days, seems to me to be legalized prostitution. This is the cause of my wretchedness. But among so many miserable creatures so unhappily yoked, I alone am bound to be silent, I alone am to blame for my misery. My marriage was my own doing."

She stopped short, and bitter tears fell in the silence.

"In the depths of my wretchedness, in the midst of this sea of distress," she went on, "I found some sands on which to set foot and suffer at leisure. A great tempest swept everything away. And here am I, helpless and alone, too weak to cope with storms."

"We are never weak while God is with us," said the priest. "And if your cravings for affection cannot be satisfied here on earth, have you no duties to perform?"

"Duties continually!" she exclaimed, with something of impatience in her tone. "But where for me are the sentiments which give us strength to perform them? Nothing from nothing, nothing for nothing,—this, monsieur, is one of the most inexorable laws of nature, physical or spiritual. Would you have these trees break into leaf without the sap which swells the buds? It is the same with our human nature; and in me the sap is dried up at its source."

"I am not going to speak to you of religious sentiments

of which resignation is born," said the curé, "but of motherhood, madame, surely——"

"Stop, monsieur!" said the Marquise, "with you I will be sincere. Alas! in future I can be sincere with no one; I am condemned to falsehood. The world requires continual grimaces, and we are bidden to obey its conventions if we would escape reproach. There are two kinds of motherhood, monsieur; once I knew nothing of such distinctions, but I know them now. Only half of me has become a mother; it were better for me if I had not been a mother at all. Hélène is not *his* child! Oh! do not start. At Saint-Lange there are volcanic depths whence come lurid gleams of light and earthquake shocks to shake the fragile edifices of laws not based on nature. I have borne a child, that is enough, I am a mother in the eye of the law. But you, monsieur, with your delicately compassionate soul, can perhaps understand this cry from an unhappy woman who has suffered no lying illusions to enter her heart. God will judge me, but surely I have only obeyed His laws by giving way to the affections which He Himself set in me, and this I have learned from my own soul.—What is a child, monsieur, but the image of two beings, the fruit of two sentiments spontaneously blended? Unless it is owned by every fibre of the body, as by every chord of tenderness in the heart; unless it recalls the bliss of love, the hours, the places where two creatures were happy, their words that overflowed with the music of humanity, and their sweet imaginings, that child is an incomplete creation. Yes, those two should find the poetic dreams of their intimate double life realized in their child as in an exquisite miniature; it should be for them a never-failing spring of emotion, implying their whole past and their whole future.

"My poor little Hélène is her father's child, the offspring of duty and of chance. In me she finds nothing but the affection of instinct, the woman's natural compassion for the child of her womb. Socially speaking, I am above reproach. Have I not sacrificed my life and my happiness to my child?

Her cries go to my heart; if she were to fall into the water, I should spring to save her, but she is not in my heart.

"Ah! love set me dreaming of a motherhood far greater and more complete. In a vanished dream I held in my arms a child conceived in desire before it was begotten, the exquisite flower of life that blossoms in the soul before it sees the light of day. I am Hélène's mother only in the sense that I brought her forth. When she needs me no longer, there will be an end of my motherhood; with the extinction of the cause, the effects will cease. If it is a woman's adorable prerogative that her motherhood may last through her child's life, surely that divine persistence of sentiment is due to the far-reaching glory of the conception of the soul? Unless a child has lain wrapped about from life's first beginnings by the mother's soul, the instinct of motherhood dies in her as in the animals. This is true; I feel that it is true. As my poor little one grows older, my heart closes. My sacrifices have driven us apart. And yet I know, monsieur, that to another child my heart would have gone out in inexhaustible love; for that other I should not have known what sacrifice meant, all had been delight. In this, monsieur, my instincts are stronger than reason, stronger than religion or all else in me. Does the woman who is neither wife nor mother sin in wishing to die when, for her misfortune, she has caught a glimpse of the infinite beauty of love, the limitless joy of motherhood? What can become of her? *I* can tell you what she feels. I cannot put that memory from me so resolutely but that a hundred times, night and day, visions of a happiness, greater it may be than the reality, rise before me, followed by a shudder which shakes brain and heart and body. Before these cruel visions, my feelings and thoughts grow colorless, and I ask myself, 'What would my life have been *if——?*'"

She hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"There you see the depths of my heart!" she continued. "For *his* child I could have acquiesced in any lot however dreadful. He who died, bearing the burden of the sins of the

world, will forgive this thought of which I am dying; but the world, I know, is merciless. In its ears my words are blasphemies; I am outraging all its codes. Oh! that I could wage war against this world and break down and refashion its laws and traditions! Has it not turned all my thoughts, and feelings, and longings, and hopes, and every fibre in me into so many sources of pain? Spoiled my future, present, and past? For me the daylight is full of gloom, my thoughts pierce me like a sword, my child is and is not.

"Oh, when Hélène speaks to me, I wish that her voice were different, when she looks into my face I wish that she had other eyes. She constantly keeps me in mind of all that should have been and is not. I cannot bear to have her near me. I smile at her, I try to make up to her for the real affection of which she is defrauded. I am wretched, monsieur, too wretched to live. And I am supposed to be a pattern wife. And I have committed no sins. And I am respected! I have fought down forbidden love which sprang up at unawares within me; but if I have kept the letter of the law, have I kept it in my heart? There has never been but one here," she said, laying her right hand on her breast, "one and no other; and my child feels it. Certain looks and tones and gestures mould a child's nature, and my poor little one feels no thrill in the arm I put about her, no tremor comes into my voice, no softness into my eyes when I speak to her or take her up. She looks at me, and I cannot endure the reproach in her eyes. There are times when I shudder to think that some day she may be my judge and condemn her mother unheard. Heaven grant that hate may not grow up between us! Ah! God in heaven, rather let the tomb open for me, rather let me end my days here at Saint-Lange!—I want to go back to the world where I shall find my other soul and become wholly a mother. Ah! forgive me, sir, I am mad. Those words were choking me; now they are spoken. Ah! you are weeping too! You will not despise me——"

She heard the child come in from a walk. "Hélène, my child, come here!" she called. The words sounded like a cry of despair.

The little girl ran in, laughing and calling to her mother to see a butterfly which she had caught; but at the sight of that mother's tears she grew quiet of a sudden, and went up close, and received a kiss on her forehead.

"She will be very beautiful some day," said the priest.

"She is her father's child," said the Marquise, kissing the little one with eager warmth, as if she meant to pay a debt of affection or to extinguish some feeling of remorse.

"How hot you are, mamma!"

"There, go away, my angel," said the Marquise.

The child went. She did not seem at all sorry to go; she did not look back; glad perhaps to escape from a sad face, and instinctively comprehending already an antagonism of feeling in its expression. A mother's love finds language in smiles; they are a part of the divine right of motherhood. The Marquise could not smile. She flushed red as she felt the curé's eyes. She had hoped to act a mother's part before him, but neither she nor her child could deceive him. And, indeed, when a woman loves sincerely, in the kiss she gives there is a divine honey; it is as if a soul were breathed forth in the caress, a subtle flame of fire which brings warmth to the heart; the kiss that lacks this delicious unction is meagre and formal. The priest had felt the difference. He could fathom the depths that lie between the motherhood of the flesh and the motherhood of the heart. He gave the Marquise a keen, scrutinizing glance, then he said:

"You are right, madame; it would be better for you if you were dead——"

"Ah!" she cried, "then you know all my misery; I see you do if, Christian priest as you are, you can guess my determination to die and sanction it. Yes, I meant to die, but I have lacked the courage. The spirit was strong, but the flesh was weak, and when my hand did not tremble, the spirit within me wavered.

"I do not know the reason of these inner struggles, and alternations. I am very pitiably a woman no doubt, weak in my will, strong only to love. Oh, I despise myself. At night,

when all my household was asleep, I would go out bravely as far as the lake; but when I stood on the brink, my cowardice shrank from self-destruction. To you I will confess my weakness. When I lay in my bed, again, shame would come over me, and courage would come back. Once I took a dose of laudanum; I was ill, but I did not die. I thought I had emptied the phial, but I had only taken half the dose."

"You are lost, madame," the curé said gravely, with tears in his voice. "You will go back into the world, and you will deceive the world. You will seek and find a compensation (as you imagine it to be) for your woes; then will come a day of reckoning for your pleasures——"

"Do you think," she cried, "that *I* shall bestow the last, the most precious treasures of my heart upon the first base impostor who can play the comedy of passion? That I would pollute my life for a moment of doubtful pleasure? No; the flame which shall consume my soul shall be love, and nothing but love. All men, monsieur, have the senses of their sex, but not all have the man's soul which satisfies all the requirements of our nature, drawing out the melodious harmony which never breaks forth save in response to the pressure of feeling. Such a soul is not found twice in our lifetime. The future that lies before me is hideous; I know it. A woman is nothing without love; beauty is nothing without pleasure. And even if happiness were offered to me a second time, would not the world frown upon it? I owe my daughter an honored mother. Oh! I am condemned to live in an iron circle, from which there is but one shameful way of escape. The round of family duties, a thankless and irksome task, is in store for me. I shall curse life; but my child shall have at least a fair semblance of a mother. I will give her treasures of virtue for the treasures of love of which I defraud her.

"I have not even the mother's desire to live to enjoy her child's happiness. I have no belief in happiness. What will Hélène's fate be? My own, beyond doubt. How can a mother insure that the man to whom she gives her daughter will be the husband of her heart? You pour scorn on the

miserable creatures who sell themselves for a few coins to any passer-by, though want and hunger absolve the brief union; while another union, horrible for quite other reasons, is tolerated, nay, encouraged, by society, and a young and innocent girl is married to a man whom she has only met occasionally during the previous three months. She is sold for her whole lifetime. It is true that the price is high! If you allow her no compensation for her sorrows, you might at least respect her; but no, the most virtuous of women cannot escape calumny. This is our fate in its double aspect. Open prostitution and shame; secret prostitution and unhappiness. As for the poor, portionless girls, they may die or go mad, without a soul to pity them. Beauty and virtue are not marketable in the bazaar where souls and bodies are bought and sold—in the den of selfishness which you call society. Why not disinherit daughters? Then, at least, you might fulfil one of the laws of nature, and guided by your own inclinations, choose your companions."

"Madame, from your talk it is clear to me that neither the spirit of family nor the sense of religion appeals to you. Why should you hesitate between the claims of the social selfishness which irritates you, and the purely personal selfishness which craves satisfactions——"

"The family, monsieur—does such a thing exist? I decline to recognize as a family a knot of individuals bidden by society to divide the property after the death of father and mother, and to go their separate ways. A family means a temporary association of persons brought together by no will of their own, dissolved at once by death. Our laws have broken up homes and estates, and the old family tradition handed down from generation to generation. I see nothing but wreck and ruin about me."

"Madame, you will only return to God when His hand has been heavy upon you, and I pray that you have time enough given to you in which to make your peace with Him. Instead of looking to heaven for comfort, you are fixing your eyes on earth. Philosophism and personal interest have in-

vaded your heart; like the children of the sceptical eighteenth century, you are deaf to the voice of religion. The pleasures of this life bring nothing but misery. You are about to make an exchange of sorrows, that is all."

She smiled bitterly.

"I will falsify your predictions," she said. "I shall be faithful to him who died for me."

"Sorrow," he answered, "is not likely to live long save in souls disciplined by religion," and he lowered his eyes respectfully lest the Marquise should read his doubts in them. The energy of her outburst had grieved him. He had seen the self that lurked beneath so many forms, and despaired of softening a heart which affliction seemed to sear. The divine Sower's seed could not take root in such a soil, and His gentle voice was drowned by the clamorous outcry of self-pity. Yet the good man returned again and again with an apostle's earnest persistence, brought back by a hope of leading so noble and proud a soul to God; until the day when he made the discovery that the Marquise only cared to talk with him because it was sweet to speak of him who was no more. He would not lower his ministry by condoning her passion, and confined the conversation more and more to generalities and commonplaces.

Spring came, and with the spring the Marquise found distraction from her deep melancholy. She busied herself for lack of other occupation with her estate, making improvements for amusement.

In October she left the old château. In the life of leisure at Saint-Lange she had recovered from her grief and grown fair and fresh. Her grief had been violent at first in its course, as the quoit hurled forth with all the player's strength, and like the quoit after many oscillations, each feebler than the last, it had slackened into melancholy. Melancholy is made up of a succession of such oscillations, the first touching upon despair, the last on the border between pain and pleasure; in youth, it is the twilight of dawn; in age, the dusk of night.

As the Marquise drove through the village in her traveling carriage, she met the curé on his way back from the church. She bowed in response to his farewell greeting, but it was with lowered eyes and averted face. She did not wish to see him again. The village curé had judged this poor Diana of Ephesus only too well.

III.

AT THIRTY YEARS

Madame Firmiani was giving a ball. M. Charles de Vandenesse, a young man of great promise, the bearer of one of those historic names which, in spite of the efforts of legislation, are always associated with the glory of France, had received letters of introduction to some of the great lady's friends in Naples, and had come to thank the hostess and to take his leave.

Vandenesse had already acquitted himself creditably on several diplomatic missions; and now that he had received an appointment as attaché to a plenipotentiary at the Congress of Laybach, he wished to take advantage of the opportunity to make some study of Italy on the way. This ball was a sort of farewell to Paris and its amusements and its rapid whirl of life, to the great eddying intellectual centre and maelstrom of pleasure; and a pleasant thing it is to be borne along by the current of this sufficiently slandered great city of Paris. Yet Charles de Vandenesse had little to regret, accustomed as he had been for the past three years to salute European capitals and turn his back upon them at the capricious bidding of a diplomatist's destiny. Women no longer made any impression upon him; perhaps he thought that a real passion would play too large a part in a diplomatist's life; or perhaps that the paltry amusements of frivolity were too empty for a man of strong character. We all of us have

huge claims to strength of character. There is no man in France, be he never so ordinary a member of the rank and file of humanity, that will waive pretensions to something beyond mere cleverness.

Charles, young though he was—he was scarcely turned thirty—looked at life with a philosophic mind, concerning himself with theories and means and ends, while other men of his age were thinking of pleasure, sentiments, and the like illusions. He forced back into some inner depth the generosity and enthusiasms of youth, and by nature he was generous. He tried hard to be cool and calculating, to coin the fund of wealth which chanced to be in his nature into gracious manners, and courtesy, and attractive arts; 'tis the proper task of an ambitious man, to play a sorry part to gain "a good position," as we call it in modern days.

He had been dancing, and now he gave a farewell glance over the rooms, to carry away a distinct impression of the ball, moved, doubtless, to some extent by the feeling which prompts a theatre-goer to stay in his box to see the final tableau before the curtain falls. But M. de Vandenesse had another reason for his survey. He gazed curiously at the scene before him, so French in character and in movement, seeking to carry away a picture of the light and laughter and the faces at this Parisian fête, to compare with novel faces and picturesque surroundings awaiting him at Naples, where he meant to spend a few days before presenting himself at his post. He seemed to be drawing the comparison now between this France so variable, changing even as you study her, with the manners and aspects of that other land known to him as yet only by contradictory hearsay tales or books of travel, for the most part unsatisfactory. Thoughts of a somewhat poetical cast, albeit hackneyed and trite to our modern ideas, crossed his brain, in response to some longing of which, perhaps, he himself was hardly conscious, a desire in the depths of a heart fastidious rather than jaded, vacant rather than seared.

"These are the wealthiest and most fashionable women and

the greatest ladies in Paris," he said to himself. "These are the great men of the day, great orators and men of letters, great names and titles; artists and men in power; and yet in it all it seems to me as if there were nothing but petty intrigues and still-born loves, meaningless smiles and causeless scorn, eyes lighted by no flame within, brain-power in abundance running aimlessly to waste. All those pink-and-white faces are here not so much for enjoyment, as to escape from dulness. None of the emotion is genuine. If you ask for nothing but court feathers properly adjusted, fresh gauzes and pretty toilettes and fragile, fair women, if you desire simply to skim the surface of life, here is your world for you. Be content with meaningless phrases and fascinating simpers, and do not ask for real feeling. For my own part, I abhor the stale intrigues which end in sub-prefectures and receiver-generals' places and marriages; or, if love comes into the question, in stealthy compromises, so ashamed are we of the mere semblance of passion. Not a single one of all these eloquent faces tells you of a soul, a soul wholly absorbed by one idea as by remorse. Regrets and misfortune go about shamefacedly clad in jests. There is not one woman here whose resistance I should care to overcome, not one who could drag you down to the pit. Where will you find energy in Paris? A poniard here is a curious toy to hang from a gilt nail, in a picturesque sheath to match. The women, the brains, and hearts of Paris are all on a par. There is no passion left, because we have no individuality. High birth and intellect and fortune are all reduced to one level; we all have taken to the uniform black coat by way of mourning for a dead France. There is no love between equals. Between two lovers there should be differences to efface, wide gulfs to fill. The charm of love fled from us in 1789. Our dulness and our humdrum lives are the outcome of the political system. Italy at any rate is the land of sharp contrasts. Woman there is a malevolent animal, a dangerous unreasoning siren, guided only by her tastes and appetites, a creature no more to be trusted than a tiger——"

Mme. Firmiani here came up to interrupt this soliloquy made up of vague, conflicting, and fragmentary thoughts which cannot be reproduced in words. The whole charm of such musing lies in its vagueness—what is it but a sort of mental haze?

"I want to introduce you to some one who has the greatest wish to make your acquaintance, after all that she has heard of you," said the lady, taking his arm.

She brought him into the next room, and with such a smile and glance as a Parisienne alone can give, she indicated a woman sitting by the hearth.

"Who is she?" the Comte de Vandenesse asked quickly.

"You have heard her name more than once coupled with praise or blame. She is a woman who lives in seclusion—a perfect mystery."

"Oh! if ever you have been merciful in your life, for pity's sake tell me her name."

"She is the Marquise d'Aiglemont."

"I will take lessons from her; she has managed to make a peer of France of that eminently ordinary person her husband, and a dullard into a power in the land. But, pray tell me this, did Lord Grenville die for her sake, do you think, as some women say?"

"Possibly. Since that adventure, real or imaginary, she is very much changed, poor thing! She has not gone into society since. Four years of constancy—that is something in Paris. If she is here to-night——" Here Mme. Firmiani broke off, adding with a mysterious expression, "I am forgetting that I must say nothing. Go and talk with her."

For a moment Charles stood motionless, leaning lightly against the frame of the doorway, wholly absorbed in his scrutiny of a woman who had become famous, no one exactly knew how or why. Such curious anomalies are frequent enough in the world. Mme. d'Aiglemont's reputation was certainly no more extraordinary than plenty of other great reputations. There are men who are always in travail of some great work which never sees the light, statisticians held to

be profound on the score of calculations which they take very good care not to publish, politicians who live on a newspaper article, men of letters and artists whose performances are never given to the world, men of science who pass current among those who know nothing of science, much as Sganarelle is a Latinist for those who know no Latin; there are the men who are allowed by general consent to possess a peculiar capacity for some one thing, be it for the direction of arts, or for the conduct of an important mission. The admirable phrase, "A man with a special subject," might have been invented on purpose for these acephalous species in the domain of literature and politics.

Charles gazed longer than he intended. He was vexed with himself for feeling so strongly interested; it is true, however, that the lady's appearance was a refutation of the young man's ballroom generalizations.

The Marquise had reached her thirtieth year. She was beautiful in spite of her fragile form and extremely delicate look. Her greatest charm lay in her still face, revealing unfathomed depths of soul. Some haunting, ever-present thought veiled, as it were, the full brilliance of eyes which told of a fevered life and boundless resignation. So seldom did she raise the eyelids soberly downcast, and so listless were her glances, that it almost seemed as if the fire in her eyes were reserved for some occult contemplation. Any man of genius and feeling must have felt strangely attracted by her gentleness and silence. If the mind sought to explain the mysterious problem of a constant inward turning from the present to the past, the soul was no less interested in initiating itself into the secrets of a heart proud in some sort of its anguish. Everything about her, moreover, was in keeping with these thoughts which she inspired. Like almost all women who have very long hair, she was very pale and perfectly white. The marvelous fineness of her skin (that almost unerring sign) indicated a quick sensibility which could be seen yet more unmistakably in her features; there was the same minute and wonderful delicacy of finish in them that

the Chinese artist gives to his fantastic figures. Perhaps her neck was rather too long, but such necks belong to the most graceful type, and suggest vague affinities between a woman's head and the magnetic curves of the serpent. Leave not a single one of the thousand signs and tokens by which the most inscrutable character betrays itself to an observer of human nature, he has but to watch carefully the little movements of a woman's head, the ever-varying expressive turns and curves of her neck and throat, to read her nature.

Mme. d'Aiglemont's dress harmonized with the haunting thought that informed the whole woman. Her hair was gathered up into a tall coronet of broad plaits, without ornament of any kind; she seemed to have bidden farewell for ever to elaborate toilettes. Nor were any of the small arts of coquetry which spoil so many women to be detected in her. Perhaps her bodice, modest though it was, did not altogether conceal the dainty grace of her figure, perhaps, too, her gown looked rich from the extreme distinction of its fashion; and if it is permissible to look for expression in the arrangement of stuffs, surely those numerous straight folds invested her with a great dignity. There may have been some lingering trace of the indelible feminine foible in the minute care bestowed upon her hand and foot; yet, if she allowed them to be seen with some pleasure, it would have tasked the utmost malice of a rival to discover any affectation in her gestures, so natural did they seem, so much a part of old childish habit, that her careless grace absolved this vestige of vanity.

All these little characteristics, the nameless trifles which combine to make up the sum of a woman's prettiness or ugliness, her charm or lack of charm, can only be indicated, when, as with Mme. d'Aiglemont, a personality dominates and gives coherence to the details, informing them, blending them all in an exquisite whole. Her manner was perfectly in accord with her style of beauty and her dress. Only to certain women at a certain age is it given to put language into their attitude. Is it joy or is it sorrow that teaches a woman of thirty the secret of that eloquence of carriage, so that she

must always remain an enigma which each interprets by the aid of his hopes, desires, or theories?

The way in which the Marquise leaned both elbows on the arm of her chair, the toying of her interclasped fingers, the curve of her throat, the indolent lines of her languid but lissome body as she lay back in graceful exhaustion, as it were; her indolent limbs, her unstudied pose, the utter lassitude of her movements,—all suggested that this was a woman for whom life had lost its interest, a woman who had known the joys of love only in dreams, a woman bowed down by the burden of memories of the past, a woman who had long since despaired of the future and despaired of herself, an unoccupied woman who took the emptiness of her own life for the nothingness of life.

Charles de Vandenesse saw and admired the beautiful picture before him, as a kind of artistic success beyond an ordinary woman's powers of attainment. He was acquainted with d'Aiglemont; and now, at the first sight of d'Aiglemont's wife, the young diplomatist saw at a glance a disproportionate marriage, an incompatibility (to use the legal jargon) so great that it was impossible that the Marquise should love her husband. And yet—the Marquise d'Aiglemont's life was above reproach, and for any observer the mystery about her was the more interesting on this account. The first impulse of surprise over, Vandenesse cast about for the best way of approaching Mme. d'Aiglemont. He would try a commonplace piece of diplomacy, he thought; he would disconcert her by a piece of clumsiness and see how she would receive it.

"Madame," he said, seating himself near her, "through a fortunate indiscretion I have learned that, for some reason unknown to me, I have had the good fortune to attract your notice. I owe you the more thanks because I have never been so honored before. At the same time, you are responsible for one of my faults, for I mean never to be modest again——"

"You will make a mistake, monsieur," she laughed; "vanity should be left to those who have nothing else to recommend them."

The conversation thus opened ranged at large, in the usual way, over a multitude of topics—art and literature, politics, men and things—till insensibly they fell to talking of the eternal theme in France and all the world over—love, sentiment, and women.

"We are bond-slaves."

"You are queens."

This was the gist and substance of all the more or less ingenious discourse between Charles and the Marquise, as of all such discourses—past, present, and to come. Allow a certain space of time, and the two formulas shall begin to mean "Love me," and "I will love you."

"Madame," Charles de Vandenesse exclaimed under his breath, "you have made me bitterly regret that I am leaving Paris. In Italy I certainly shall not pass hours in intellectual enjoyment such as this has been."

"Perhaps, monsieur, you will find happiness, and happiness is worth more than all the brilliant things, true and false, that are said every evening in Paris."

Before Charles took leave, he asked permission to pay a farewell call on the Marquise d'Aiglemont, and very lucky did he feel himself when the form of words in which he expressed himself for once was used in all sincerity; and that night, and all day long on the morrow, he could not put the thought of the Marquise out of his mind.

At times he wondered why she had singled him out, what she had meant when she asked him to come to see her, and thought supplied an inexhaustible commentary. Again it seemed to him that he had discovered the motives of her curiosity, and he grew intoxicated with hope or frigidly sober with each new construction put upon that piece of commonplace civility. Sometimes it meant everything, sometimes nothing. He made up his mind at last that he would not yield to this inclination, and—went to call on Mme. d'Aiglemont.

There are thoughts which determine our conduct, while we do not so much as suspect their existence. If at first sight

this assertion appears to be less a truth than a paradox, let any candid inquirer look into his own life and he shall find abundant confirmation therein. Charles went to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and so obeyed one of these latent, pre-existent germs of thought, of which our experience and our intellectual gains and achievements are but later and tangible developments.

For a young man a woman of thirty has irresistible attractions. There is nothing more natural, nothing better established, no human tie of stouter tissue than the heart-deep attachment between such a woman as the Marquise d'Aiglemont and such a man as Charles de Vandenesse. You can see examples of it every day in the world. A girl, as a matter of fact, has too many young illusions, she is too inexperienced, the instinct of sex counts for too much in her love for a young man to feel flattered by it. A woman of thirty knows all that is involved in the self-surrender to be made. Among the impulses of the first, put curiosity and other motives than love; the second acts with integrity of sentiment. The first yields; the second makes deliberate choice. Is not that choice in itself an immense flattery? A woman armed with experience, forewarned by knowledge, almost always dearly bought, seems to give more than herself; while the inexperienced and credulous girl, unable to draw comparisons for lack of knowledge, can appreciate nothing at its just worth. She accepts love and ponders it. A woman is a counselor and a guide at an age when we love to be guided and obedience is delight; while a girl would fain learn all things, meeting us with a girl's *naïveté* instead of a woman's tenderness. She affords a single triumph; with a woman there is resistance upon resistance to overcome; she has but joy and tears, a woman has rapture and remorse.

A girl cannot play the part of a mistress unless she is so corrupt that we turn from her with loathing; a woman has a thousand ways of preserving her power and her dignity; she has risked so much for love, that she must bid him pass through his myriad transformations, while her too submissive

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rival gives a sense of too serene security which palls. If the one sacrifices her maidenly pride, the other immolates the honor of a whole family. A girl's coquetry is of the simplest, she thinks that all is said when the veil is laid aside; a woman's coquetry is endless, she shrouds herself in veil after veil, she satisfies every demand of man's vanity, the novice responds but to one.

And there are terrors, fears, and hesitations—trouble and storm in the love of a woman of thirty years, never to be found in a young girl's love. At thirty years a woman asks her lover to give her back the esteem she has forfeited for his sake; she lives only for him, her thoughts are full of his future, he must have a great career, she bids him make it glorious; she can obey, entreat, command, humble herself, or rise in pride; times without number she brings comfort when a young girl can only make moan. And with all the advantages of her position, the woman of thirty can be a girl again, for she can play all parts, assume a girl's bashfulness, and grow the fairer even for a mischance.

Between these two feminine types lies the immeasurable difference which separates the foreseen from the unforeseen, strength from weakness. The woman of thirty satisfies every requirement; the young girl must satisfy none, under penalty of ceasing to be a young girl. Such ideas as these, developing in a young man's mind, help to strengthen the strongest of all passions, a passion in which all spontaneous and natural feeling is blended with the artificial sentiment created by conventional manners.

The most important and decisive step in a woman's life is the very one that she invariably regards as the most insignificant. After her marriage she is no longer her own mistress, she is the queen and the bond-slave of the domestic hearth. The sanctity of womanhood is incompatible with social liberty and social claims; and for a woman emancipation means corruption. If you give a stranger the right of entry into the sanctuary of home, do you not put yourself at his mercy? How then if she herself bids him enter in? Is not

this an offence, or, to speak more accurately, a first step towards an offence? You must either accept this theory with all its consequences, or absolve illicit passion. French society hitherto has chosen the third and middle course of looking on and laughing when offences come, apparently upon the Spartan principle of condoning the theft and punishing clumsiness. And this system, it may be, is a very wise one. 'Tis a most appalling punishment to have all your neighbors pointing the finger of scorn at you, a punishment that a woman feels in her very heart. Women are tenacious, and all of them should be tenacious of respect; without esteem they cannot exist, esteem is the first demand that they make of love. The most corrupt among them feels that she must, in the first place, pledge the future to buy absolution for the past, and strives to make her lover understand that only for irresistible bliss can she barter the respect which the world henceforth will refuse to her.

Some such reflections cross the mind of any woman who for the first time and alone receives a visit from a young man; and this especially when, like Charles de Vandenesse, the visitor is handsome or clever. And similarly there are not many young men who would fail to base some secret wish on one of the thousand and one ideas which justify the instinct that attracts them to a beautiful, witty, and unhappy woman like the Marquise d'Aiglemont.

Mme. d'Aiglemont, therefore, felt troubled when M. de Vandenesse was announced; and as for him, he was almost confused in spite of the assurance which is like a matter of costume for a diplomatist. But not for long. The Marquise took refuge at once in the friendliness of manner which women use as a defence against the misinterpretations of fatuity, a manner which admits of no afterthought, while it paves the way to sentiment (to make use of a figure of speech), tempering the transition through the ordinary forms of politeness. In this ambiguous position, where the four roads leading respectively to Indifference, Respect, Wonder, and Passion meet, a woman may stay as long as she

pleases, but only at thirty years does she understand all the possibilities of the situation. Laughter, tenderness, and jest are all permitted to her at the crossing of the ways; she has acquired the tact by which she finds all the responsive chords in a man's nature, and skill in judging the sounds which she draws forth. Her silence is as dangerous as her speech. You will never read her at that age, nor discover if she is frank or false, nor how far she is serious in her admissions or merely laughing at you. She gives you the right to engage in a game of fence with her, and suddenly by a glance, a gesture of proved potency, she closes the combat and turns from you with your secret in her keeping, free to offer you up to a jest, free to interest herself in you, safe alike in her weakness and your strength.

Although the Marquise d'Aiglemont took up her position upon this neutral ground during the first interview, she knew how to preserve a high womanly dignity. The sorrows of which she never spoke seemed to hang over her assumed gaiety like a light cloud obscuring the sun. When Vandenesse went out, after a conversation which he had enjoyed more than he had thought possible, he carried with him the conviction that this was like to be too costly a conquest for his aspirations.

"It would mean sentiment from here to yonder," he thought, "and correspondence enough to wear out a deputy second-clerk on his promotion. And yet if I really cared——"

Luckless phrase that has been the ruin of many an infatuated mortal. In France the way to love lies through self-love. Charles went back to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and imagined that she showed symptoms of pleasure in his conversion. And then, instead of giving himself up like a boy to the joy of falling in love, he tried to play a double rôle. He did his best to act passion and to keep cool enough to analyze the progress of this flirtation, to be lover and diplomatist at once; but youth and hot blood and analysis could only end in one way, over head and ears in love; for, natural or artificial, the Marquise was more than his match. Each time

as he went out from Mme. d'Aiglemont, he strenuously held himself to his distrust, and submitted the progressive situations of his case to a rigorous scrutiny fatal to his own emotions.

"To-day she gave me to understand that she has been very unhappy and lonely," said he to himself, after the third visit, "and that but for her little girl she would have longed for death. She was perfectly resigned. Now as I am neither her brother nor her spiritual director, why should she confide her troubles to *me?* She loves me."

Two days later he came away apostrophizing modern manners.

"Love takes on the hue of every age. In 1822 love is a doctrinaire. Instead of proving love by deeds, as in times past, we have taken to argument and rhetoric and debate. Women's tactics are reduced to three shifts. In the first place, they declare that we cannot love as they love. (Coquetry! the Marquise simply threw it at me, like a challenge, this evening!) Next they grow pathetic, to appeal to our natural generosity or self-love; for does it not flatter a young man's vanity to console a woman for a great calamity? And lastly, they have a craze for virginity. She must have thought that I thought her very innocent. My good faith is like to become an excellent speculation."

But a day came when every suspicious idea was exhausted. He asked himself whether the Marquise was not sincere; whether so much suffering could be feigned, and why she should act the part of resignation? She lived in complete seclusion; she drank in silence of a cup of sorrow scarcely to be guessed unless from the accent of some chance exclamation in a voice always well under control. From that moment Charles felt a keen interest in Mme. d'Aiglemont. And yet, though his visits had come to be a recognized thing, and in some sort a necessity to them both, and though the hour was kept free by tacit agreement, Vandenesse still thought that this woman with whom he was in love was more clever than sincere. "Decidedly, she is an uncommonly clever woman," he used to say to himself as he went away.

When he came into the room, there was the Marquise in her favorite attitude, melancholy expressed in her whole form. She made no movement when he entered, only raised her eyes and looked full at him, but the glance that she gave him was like a smile. Mme. d'Aiglemont's manner meant confidence and sincere friendship, but of love there was no trace. Charles sat down and found nothing to say. A sensation for which no language exists troubled him.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked in a softened voice.

"Nothing. . . . Yes; I am thinking of something of which, as yet, you have not thought at all."

"What is it?"

"Why—the Congress is over."

"Well," she said, "and ought you to have been at the Congress?"

A direct answer would have been the most eloquent and delicate declaration of love; but Charles did not make it. Before the candid friendship in Mme. d'Aiglemont's face all the calculations of vanity, the hopes of love, and the diplomatist's doubts died away. She did not suspect, or she seemed not to suspect, his love for her; and Charles, in utter confusion turning upon himself, was forced to admit that he had said and done nothing which could warrant such a belief on her part. For M. de Vandenesse that evening, the Marquise was, as she had always been, simple and friendly, sincere in her sorrow, glad to have a friend, proud to find a nature responsive to her own—nothing more. It had not entered her mind that a woman could yield twice; she had known love—love lay bleeding still in the depths of her heart, but she did not imagine that bliss could bring her its rapture twice, for she believed not merely in the intellect, but in the soul; and for her love was no simple attraction; it drew her with all noble attractions.

In a moment Charles became a young man again, enthralled by the splendor of a nature so lofty. He wished for a fuller initiation into the secret history of a life blighted

rather by fate than by her own fault. Mme. d'Aiglemont heard him ask the cause of the overwhelming sorrow which had blended all the harmonies of sadness with her beauty; she gave him one glance, but that searching look was like a seal set upon some solemn compact.

"Ask no more such questions of me," she said. "Four years ago, on this very day, the man who loved me, for whom I would have given up everything, even my own self-respect, died, and died to save my name. That love was still young and pure and full of illusions when it came to an end. Before I gave way to passion—and never was woman so urged by fate—I had been drawn into the mistake that ruins many a girl's life, a marriage with a man whose agreeable manners concealed his emptiness. Marriage plucked my hopes away one by one. And now, to-day, I have forfeited happiness through marriage, as well as the happiness styled criminal, and I have known no happiness. Nothing is left to me. If I could not die, at the least I ought to be faithful to my memories."

No tears came with the words. Her eyes fell, and there was a slight twisting of the fingers interclasped, according to her wont. It was simply said, but in her voice there was a note of despair, deep as her love seemed to have been, which left Charles without a hope. The dreadful story of a life told in three sentences, with that twisting of the fingers for all comment, the might of anguish in a fragile woman, the dark depths masked by a fair face, the tears of four years of mourning fascinated Vandenesse; he sat silent and diminished in the presence of her woman's greatness and nobleness, seeing not the physical beauty so exquisite, so perfectly complete, but the soul so great in its power to feel. He had found, at last, the ideal of his fantastic imaginings, the ideal so vigorously invoked by all who look on life as the raw material of a passion for which many a one seeks ardently, and dies before he has grasped the whole of the dreamed-of treasure.

With those words of hers in his ears, in the presence of her sublime beauty, his own thoughts seemed poor and narrow.

Powerless as he felt himself to find words of his own, simple enough and lofty enough to scale the heights of this exaltation, he took refuge in platitudes as to the destiny of women.

"Madame, we must either forget our pain, or hollow out a tomb for ourselves."

But reason always cuts a poor figure beside sentiment; the one being essentially restricted, like everything that is positive, while the other is infinite. To set to work to reason where you are required to feel, is the mark of a limited nature. Vandenesse therefore held his peace, sat awhile with his eyes fixed upon her, then came away. A prey to novel thoughts which exalted woman for him, he was in something the same position as a painter who has taken the vulgar studio model for a type of womanhood, and suddenly confronts the *Mnemosyne* of the Musée—that noblest and least appreciated of antique statues.

Charles de Vandenesse was deeply in love. He loved Mme. d'Aiglemont with the loyalty of youth, with the fervor that communicates such ineffable charm to a first passion, with a simplicity of heart of which a man only recovers some fragments when he loves again at a later day. Delicious first passion of youth, almost always deliciously savored by the woman who calls it forth; for at the golden prime of thirty, from the poetic summit of a woman's life, she can look out over the whole course of love—backwards into the past, forwards into the future—and, knowing all the price to be paid for love, enjoys her bliss with the dread of losing it ever present with her. Her soul is still fair with her waning youth, and passion daily gathers strength from the dismaying prospect of the coming days.

"This is love," Vandenesse said to himself this time as he left the Marquise, "and for my misfortune I love a woman wedded to her memories. It is hard work to struggle against a dead rival, never present to make blunders and fall out of favor, nothing of him left but his better qualities. What is it but a sort of high treason against the Ideal to attempt to break the charm of memory, to destroy the hopes that sur-

vive a lost lover, precisely because he only awakened longings, and all that is loveliest and most enchanting in love?"

These sober reflections, due to the discouragement and dread of failure with which love begins in earnest, were the last expiring effort of diplomatic reasoning. Thenceforward he knew no afterthoughts, he was the plaything of his love, and lost himself in the nothings of that strange inexplicable happiness which is full fed by a chance word, by silence, or a vague hope. He tried to love Platonically, came daily to breathe the air that she breathed, became almost a part of her house, and went everywhere with her, slave as he was of a tyrannous passion compounded of egoism and devotion of the completest. Love has its own instinct, finding the way to the heart, as the feeblest insect finds the way to its flower, with a will which nothing can dismay nor turn aside. If feeling is sincere, its destiny is not doubtful. Let a woman begin to think that her life depends on the sincerity or fervor or earnestness which her lover shall put into his longings, and is there not sufficient in the thought to put her through all the tortures of dread? It is impossible for a woman, be she wife or mother, to be secure from a young man's love. One thing it is within her power to do—to refuse to see him as soon as she learns a secret which she never fails to guess. But this is too decided a step to take at an age when marriage has become a prosaic and tiresome yoke, and conjugal affection is something less than tepid (if indeed her husband has not already begun to neglect her). Is a woman plain? She is flattered by a love which gives her fairness. Is she young and charming? She is only to be won by a fascination as great as her own power to charm, that is to say, a fascination well-nigh irresistible. Is she virtuous? There is a love sublime in its earthliness which leads her to find something like absolution in the very greatness of the surrender and glory in a hard struggle. Everything is a snare. No lesson, therefore, is too severe where the temptation is so strong. The seclusion in which the Greeks and Orientals kept and keep their women, an example more and more followed in modern

England, is the only safeguard of domestic morality; but under this system there is an end of all the charm of social intercourse; and society, and good breeding, and refinement of manners become impossible. The nations must take their choice.

So a few months went by, and Mme. d'Aiglemont discovered that her life was closely bound with this young man's life, without overmuch confusion in her surprise, and felt with something almost like pleasure that she shared his tastes and his thoughts. Had she adopted Vandenesse's ideas? Or was it Vandenesse who had made her lightest whims his own? She was not careful to inquire. She had been swept out already into the current of passion, and yet this adorable woman told herself with the confident reiteration of misgiving:

"Ah! no. I will be faithful to him who died for me."

Pascal said that "the doubt of God implies belief in God." And similarly it may be said that a woman only parleys when she has surrendered. A day came when the Marquise admitted to herself that she was loved, and with that admission came a time of wavering among countless conflicting thoughts and feelings. The superstitions of experience spoke their language. Should she be happy? Was it possible that she should find happiness outside the limits of the laws which society rightly or wrongly has set up for humanity to live by? Hitherto her cup of life had been full of bitterness. Was there any happy issue possible for the ties which united two human beings held apart by social conventions? And might not happiness be bought too dear? Still, this so ardently desired happiness, for which it is so natural to seek, might perhaps be found after all. Curiosity is always retained on the lover's side in the suit. The secret tribunal was still sitting when Vandenesse appeared, and his presence put the metaphysical spectre, reason, to flight.

If such are the successive transformations through which a sentiment, transient though it be, passes in a young man and a woman of thirty, there comes a moment of time when

the shades of difference blend into each other, when all reasonings end in a single and final reflection which is lost and absorbed in the desire which it confirms. Then the longer the resistance, the mightier the voice of love. And here endeth this lesson, or rather this study made from the *écorché,* to borrow a most graphic term from the studio, for in this history it is not so much intended to portray love as to lay bare its mechanism and its dangers. From this moment every day adds color to these dry bones, clothes them again with living flesh and blood and the charm of youth, and puts vitality into their movements; till they glow once more with the beauty, the persuasive grace of sentiment, the loveliness of life.

Charles found Mme. d'Aiglemont absorbed in thought, and to his "What is it?" spoken in thrilling tones grown persuasive with the heart's soft magic, she was careful not to reply. The delicious question bore witness to the perfect unity of their spirits; and the Marquise felt, with a woman's wonderful intuition, that to give any expression to the sorrow in her heart would be to make an advance. If, even now, each one of those words was fraught with significance for them both, in what fathomless depths might she not plunge at the first step? She read herself with a clear and lucid glance. She was silent, and Vandenesse followed her example.

"I am not feeling well," she said at last, taking alarm at the pause fraught with such great moment for them both, when the language of the eyes completely filled the blank left by the helplessness of speech.

"Madame," said Charles, and his voice was tender but unsteady with strong feeling, "soul and body are both dependent on each other. If you were happy, you would be young and fresh. Why do you refuse to ask of love all that love has taken from you? You think that your life is over when it is only just beginning. Trust yourself to a friend's care. It is so sweet to be loved."

"I am old already," she said; "there is no reason why I should not continue to suffer as in the past. And 'one must love,' do you say? Well, I must not, and I cannot. Your friendship has put some sweetness into my life, but beside you I care for no one, no one could efface my memories. A friend I accept; I should fly from a lover. Besides, would it be a very generous thing to do, to exchange a withered heart for a young heart; to smile upon illusions which now I cannot share, to cause happiness in which I should either have no belief, or tremble to lose? I should perhaps respond to his devotion with egoism, should weigh and deliberate while he felt; my memory would resent the poignancy of his happiness. No, if you love once, that love is never replaced, you see. Indeed, who would have my heart at this price?"

There was a tinge of heartless coquetry in the words, the last effort of discretion.

"If he loses courage, well and good, I shall live alone and faithful." The thought came from the very depths of the woman, for her it was the too slender willow twig caught in vain by a swimmer swept out by the current.

Vandenesse's involuntary shudder at her dictum plead more eloquently for him than all his past assiduity. Nothing moves a woman so much as the discovery of a gracious delicacy in us, such a refinement of sentiment as her own, for a woman the grace and delicacy are sure tokens of truth. Charles' start revealed the sincerity of his love. Mme. d'Aiglemont learned the strength of his affection from the intensity of his pain.

"Perhaps you are right," he said coldly. "New love, new vexation of spirit."

Then he changed the subject, and spoke of indifferent matters; but he was visibly moved, and he concentrated his gaze on Mme. d'Aiglemont as if he were seeing her for the last time.

"Adieu, madame," he said, with emotion in his voice.

"Au revoir," said she, with that subtle coquetry, the secret of a very few among women.

He made no answer and went.

When Charles was no longer there, when his empty chair spoke for him, regrets flocked in upon her, and she found fault with herself. Passion makes an immense advance as soon as a woman persuades herself that she has failed somewhat in generosity or hurt a noble nature. In love there is never any need to be on our guard against the worst in us; that is a safeguard; a woman only surrenders at the summons of a virtue. "The floor of hell is paved with good intentions,"—it is no preacher's paradox.

Vandenesse stopped away for several days. Every evening at the accustomed hour the Marquise sat expectant in remorseful impatience. She could not write—that would be a declaration, and, moreover, her instinct told her that he would come back. On the sixth day he was announced, and never had she heard the name with such delight. Her joy frightened her.

"You have punished me well," she said, addressing him.

Vandenesse gazed at her in astonishment.

"Punished?" he echoed. "And for what?" He understood her quite well, but he meant to be avenged for all that he had suffered as soon as she suspected it.

"Why have you not come to see me?" she demanded with a smile.

"Then have you seen no visitors?" asked he, parrying the question.

"Yes. M. de Ronquerolles and M. de Marsay and young d'Escrignon came and stayed for nearly two hours, the first two yesterday, the last this morning. And besides, I have had a call, I believe, from Mme. Firmiani and from your sister, Mme. de Listomère."

Here was a new infliction, torture which none can comprehend unless they know love as a fierce and all-invading tyrant whose mildest symptom is a monstrous jealousy, a perpetual desire to snatch away the beloved from every other influence.

"What!" thought he to himself, "she has seen visitors, she has been with happy creatures, and talking to them, while I was unhappy and all alone."

He buried his annoyance forthwith, and consigned love to the depths of his heart, like a coffin to the sea. His thoughts were of the kind that never find expression in words; they pass through the mind swiftly as a deadly acid, that poisons as it evaporates and vanishes. His brow, however, was overclouded; and Mme. d'Aiglemont, guided by her woman's instinct, shared his sadness without understanding it. She had hurt him, unwittingly, as Vandenesse knew. He talked over his position with her, as if his jealousy were one of those hypothetical cases which lovers love to discuss. Then the Marquise understood it all. She was so deeply moved, that she could not keep back the tears—and so these lovers entered the heaven of love.

Heaven and Hell are two great imaginative conceptions formulating our ideas of Joy and Sorrow—those two poles about which human existence revolves. Is not heaven a figure of speech covering now and for evermore an infinite of human feeling impossible to express save in its accidents—since that Joy is one? And what is Hell but the symbol of our infinite power to suffer tortures so diverse that of our pain it is possible to fashion works of art, for no two human sorrows are alike?

One evening the two lovers sat alone and side by side, silently watching one of the fairest transformations of the sky, a cloudless heaven taking hues of pale gold and purple from the last rays of the sunset. With the slow fading of the daylight, sweet thoughts seem to awaken, and soft stirrings of passion and a mysterious sense of trouble in the midst of calm. Nature sets before us vague images of bliss, bidding us enjoy the happiness within our reach, or lament it when it has fled. In those moments fraught with enchantment, when the tender light in the canopy of the sky blends in harmony with the spells working within, it is difficult to resist the heart's desires grown so magically potent. Cares are blunted, joy becomes ecstasy; pain, intolerable anguish. The pomp of sunset gives the signal for confessions and draws them forth. Silence grows more dangerous than speech, for

it gives to eyes all the power of the infinite of the heavens reflected in them. And for speech, the least word has irresistible might. Is not the light infused into the voice and purple into the glances? Is not heaven within us, or do we feel that we are in the heavens?

Vandenesse and Julie—for so she had allowed herself to be called for the past few days by him whom she loved to speak of as Charles—Vandenesse and Julie were talking together, but they had drifted very far from their original subject; and if their spoken words had grown meaningless they listened in delight to the unspoken thoughts that lurked in the sounds. Her hand lay in his. She had abandoned it to him without a thought that she had granted a proof of love.

Together they leaned forward to look out upon a majestic cloud country, full of snows and glaciers and fantastic mountain peaks with gray stains of shadow on their sides, a picture composed of sharp contrasts between fiery red and the shadows of darkness, filling the skies with a fleeting vision of glory which cannot be reproduced—magnificent swaddling-bands of sunrise, bright shrouds of the dying sun. As they leaned, Julie's hair brushed lightly against Vandenesse's cheek. She felt that light contact, and shuddered violently, and he even more, for imperceptibly they both had reached one of those inexplicable crises when quiet has wrought upon the senses until every faculty of perception is so keen that the slightest shock fills the heart lost in melancholy with sadness that overflows in tears; or raises joy to ecstasy in a heart that is lost in the vertigo of love. Almost involuntarily Julie pressed her lover's hand. That wooing pressure gave courage to his timidity. All the joy of the present, all the hopes of the future were blended in the emotion of a first caress, the bashful trembling kiss that Mme. d'Aiglemont received upon her cheek. The slighter the concession, the more dangerous and insinuating it was. For their double misfortune it was only too sincere a revelation. Two noble natures had met and blended, drawn each to each by every law of natural attraction, held apart by every ordinance.

General d'Aiglemont came in at that very moment.

"The Ministry has gone out," he said. "Your uncle will be in the new cabinet. So you stand an uncommonly good chance of an embassy, Vandenesse."

Charles and Julie looked at each other and flushed red. That blush was one more tie to unite them; there was one thought and one remorse in either mind; between two lovers guilty of a kiss there is a bond quite as strong and terrible as the bond between two robbers who have murdered a man. Something had to be said by way of reply.

"I do not care to leave Paris now," Charles said.

"We know why," said the General, with the knowing air of a man who discovers a secret. "You do not like to leave your uncle, because you do not wish to lose your chance of succeeding to the title."

The Marquise took refuge in her room, and in her mind passed a pitiless verdict upon her husband.

"His stupidity is really beyond anything!"

IV.

THE FINGER OF GOD

Between the Barrière d'Italie and the Barrière de la Santé, along the boulevard which leads to the Jardin des Plantes, you have a view of Paris fit to send an artist or the tourist, the most *blasé* in matters of landscape, into ecstasies. Reach the slightly higher ground where the line of boulevard, shaded by tall, thick-spreading trees, curves with the grace of some green and silent forest avenue, and you see spread out at your feet a deep valley populous with factories looking almost countrified among green trees and the brown streams of the Bièvre or the Gobelins.

On the opposite slope, beneath some thousands of roofs packed close together like heads in a crowd, lurks the squalor

of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau. The imposing cupola of the Panthéon, and the grim melancholy dome of the Val-du-Grace, tower proudly up above a whole town in itself, built amphitheatre-wise; every tier being grotesquely represented by a crooked line of street, so that the two public monuments look like a huge pair of giants dwarfing into insignificance the poor little houses and the tallest poplars in the valley. To your left behold the observatory, the daylight, pouring athwart its windows and galleries, producing such fantastical strange effects that the building looks like a black spectral skeleton. Further yet in the distance rises the elegant lantern tower of the Invalides, soaring up between the bluish pile of the Luxembourg and the gray tours of Saint-Sulpice. From this standpoint the lines of the architecture are blended with green leaves and gray shadows, and change every moment with every aspect of the heavens, every alteration of light or color in the sky. Afar, the skyey spaces themselves seem to be full of buildings; near, wind the serpentine curves of waving trees and green footpaths.

Away to your right, through a great gap in this singular landscape, you see the canal Saint-Martin, a long pale stripe with its edging of reddish stone quays and fringes of lime avenue. The long rows of buildings beside it, in genuine Roman style, are the public granaries.

Beyond, again, on the very last plane of all, see the smoke-dimmed slopes of Belleville covered with houses and windmills, which blend their freaks of outline with the chance effects of cloud. And still, between that horizon, vague as some childish recollection, and the serried range of roofs in the valley, a whole city lies out of sight: a huge city, engulfed, as it were, in a vast hollow between the pinnacles of the Hôpital de la Pitié and the ridge line of the Cimetière de l'Est, between suffering on the one hand and death on the other; a city sending up a smothered roar like ocean grumbling at the foot of a cliff, as if to let you know that "I am here!"

When the sunlight pours like a flood over this strip of

Paris, purifying and etherealizing the outlines, kindling answering lights here and there in the window panes, brightening the red tiles, flaming about the golden crosses, whitening walls and transforming the atmosphere into a gauzy veil, calling up rich contrasts of light and fantastic shadow; when the sky is blue and earth quivers in the heat, and the bells are pealing, then you shall see one of the eloquent fairy scenes which stamp themselves for ever on the imagination, a scene that shall find as fanatical worshipers as the wondrous views of Naples and Byzantium or the isles of Florida. Nothing is wanting to complete the harmony, the murmur of the world of men and the idyllic quiet of solitude, the voices of a million human creatures and the voice of God. There lies a whole capital beneath the peaceful cypresses of Père-Lachaise.

The landscape lay in all its beauty, sparkling in the spring sunlight, as I stood looking out over it one morning, my back against a huge elm-tree that flung its yellow flowers to the wind. And at the sight of the rich and glorious view before me, I thought bitterly of the scorn with which even in our literature we affect to hold this land of ours, and poured maledictions on the pitiable plutocrats who fall out of love with fair France, and spend their gold to acquire the right of sneering at their own country, by going through Italy at a gallop and inspecting that desecrated land through an opera-glass. I cast loving eyes on modern Paris. I was beginning to dream dreams, when the sound of a kiss disturbed the solitude and put philosophy to flight. Down the sidewalk, along the steep bank, above the rippling water, I saw beyond the Ponte des Gobelins the figure of a woman, dressed with the daintiest simplicity; she was still young, as it seemed to me, and the blithe gladness of the landscape was reflected in her sweet face. Her companion, a handsome young man, had just set down a little boy. A prettier child has never been seen, and to this day I do not know whether it was the little one or his mother who received the kiss. In their young faces, in their eyes, their smile, their every movement, you

could read the same deep and tender thought. Their arms were interlaced with such glad swiftness; they drew close together with such marvelous unanimity of impulse that, conscious of nothing but themselves, they did not so much as see me. A second child, however—a little girl, who had turned her back upon them in sullen discontent—threw me a glance, and the expression of her eyes startled me. She was as pretty and as engaging as the little brother whom she left to run about by himself, sometimes before, sometimes after their mother and her companion; but her charm was less childish, and now, as she stood mute and motionless, her attitude and demeanor suggested a torpid snake. There was something indescribably mechanical in the way in which the pretty woman and her companion paced up and down. In absence of mind, probably, they were content to walk to and fro between the little bridge and a carriage that stood waiting nearby at a corner in the boulevard, turning, stopping short now and again, looking into each other's eyes, or breaking into laughter as their casual talk grew lively or languid, grave or gay.

I watched this delicious picture a while from my hiding-place by the great elm-tree, and should have turned away no doubt and respected their privacy, if it had not been for a chance discovery. In the face of the brooding, silent, elder child I saw traces of thought overdeep for her age. When her mother and the young man at her side turned and came near, her head was frequently lowered; the furtive sidelong glances of intelligence that she gave the pair and the child her brother were nothing less than extraordinary. Sometimes the pretty woman or her friend would stroke the little boy's fair curls, or lay a caressing finger against the baby throat or the white collar as he played at keeping step with them; and no words can describe the shrewd subtlety, the ingenuous malice, the fierce intensity which lighted up that pallid little face with the faint circles already round the eyes. Truly there was a man's power of passion in that strange-looking, delicate little girl. Here were traces of suffering or of thought in her;

and which is the more certain token of death when life is in blossom—physical suffering, or the malady of too early thought preying upon a soul as yet in bud? Perhaps a mother knows. For my own part, I know of nothing more dreadful to see than an old man's thoughts on a child's forehead; even blasphemy from girlish lips is less monstrous.

The almost stupid stolidity of this child who had begun to think already, her rare gestures, everything about her, interested me. I scrutinized her curiously. Then the common whim of the observer drew me to compare her with her brother, and to note their likeness and unlikeness.

Her brown hair and dark eyes and look of precocious power made a rich contrast with the little one's fair curled head and sea-green eyes and winning helplessness. She, perhaps, was seven or eight years of age; the boy was full four years younger. Both children were dressed alike; but here again, looking closely, I noticed a difference. It was very slight, a little thing enough; but in the light of after events I saw that it meant a whole romance in the past, a whole tragedy to come. The little brown-haired maid wore a linen collar with a plain hem, her brother's was edged with dainty embroidery, that was all; but therein lay the confession of a heart's secret, a tacit preference which a child can read in the mother's inmost soul as clearly as if the spirit of God revealed it. The fair-haired child, careless and glad, looked almost like a girl, his skin was so fair and fresh, his movements so graceful, his look so sweet; while his older sister, in spite of her energy, in spite of the beauty of her features and her dazzling complexion, looked like a sickly little boy In her bright eyes there was none of the humid softness which lends such charm to children's faces; they seemed, like courtiers' eyes, to be dried by some inner fire; and in her pallor there was a certain swarthy olive tint, the sign of vigorous character. Twice her little brother came to her, holding out a tiny hunting-horn with a touching charm, a winning look, and wistful expression, which would have sent Charlet into ecstasies, but she only scowled in answer to his

"Here, Hélène, will you take it?" so persuasively spoken. The little girl, so sombre and vehement beneath her apparent indifference, shuddered, and even flushed red when her brother came near her; but the little one seemed not to notice his sister's dark mood, and his unconsciousness, blended with earnestness, marked a final difference in character between the child and the little girl, whose brow was overclouded already by the gloom of a man's knowledge and cares.

"Mamma, Hélène will not play," cried the little one, seizing an opportunity to complain while the two stood silent on the Pont des Gobelins.

"Let her alone, Charles; you know very well that she is always cross."

Tears sprang to Hélène's eyes at the words so thoughtlessly uttered by her mother as she turned abruptly to the young man by her side. The child devoured the speech in silence, but she gave her brother one of those sagacious looks that seemed inexplicable to me, glancing with a sinister expression from the bank where he stood to the Bièvre, then at the bridge and the view, and then at me.

I was afraid lest my presence should disturb the happy couple; I slipped away and took refuge behind a thicket of elder trees, which completely screened me from all eyes. Sitting quietly on the summit of the bank, I watched the ever-changing landscape and the fierce-looking little girl, for with my head almost on a level with the boulevard I could still see her through the leaves. Hélène seemed uneasy over my disappearance, her dark eyes looked for me down the alley and behind the trees with indefinable curiosity. What was I to her? Then Charles' baby laughter rang out like a bird's song in the silence. The tall, young man, with the same fair hair, was dancing him in his arms, showering kisses upon him, and the meaningless baby words of that "little language" which rises to our lips when we play with children. The mother looked on smiling, now and then, doubtless, putting in some low word that came up from the heart, for her companion would stop short in his full happiness, and the

blue eyes that turned towards her were full of glowing light and love and worship. Their voices, blending with the child's voice, reached me with a vague sense of a caress. The three figures, charming in themselves, composed a lovely scene in a glorious landscape, filling it with a pervasive unimaginable grace. A delicately fair woman, radiant with smiles, a child of love, a young man with the irresistible charm of youth, a cloudless sky; nothing was wanting in nature to complete a perfect harmony for the delight of the soul. I found myself smiling as if their happiness had been my own.

The clocks struck nine. The young man gave a tender embrace to his companion, and went towards the tilbury which an old servant drove slowly to meet him. The lady had grown grave and almost sad. The child's prattle sounded unchecked through the last farewell kisses. Then the tilbury rolled away, and the lady stood motionless, listening to the sound of the wheels, watching the little cloud of dust raised by its passage along the road. Charles ran down the green pathway back to the bridge to join his sister. I heard his silver voice calling to her.

"Why did you not come to say good-bye to my good friend?" cried he.

Hélène looked up. Never surely did such hatred gleam from a child's eyes as from hers at that moment when she turned them on the brother who stood beside her on the bank side. She gave him an angry push. Charles lost his footing on the steep slope, stumbled over the roots of a tree, and fell headlong forwards, dashing his forehead on the sharp-edged stones of the embankment, and, covered with blood, disappeared over the edge into the muddy river. The turbid water closed over a fair, bright head with a shower of splashes; one sharp shriek after another rang in my ears; then the sounds were stifled by the thick stream, and the poor child sank with a dull sound as if a stone had been thrown into the water. The accident had happened with more than lightning swiftness. I sprang down the footpath, and Hélène, stupefied with horror, shrieked again and again:

"Mamma! mamma!"

The mother was there at my side. She had flown to the spot like a bird. But neither a mother's eyes nor mine could find the exact place where the little one had gone under. There was a wide space of black hurrying water, and below in the bed of the Bièvre ten feet of mud. There was not the smallest possibility of saving the child. No one is stirring at that hour on a Sunday morning, and there are neither barges nor anglers on the Bièvre. There was not a creature in sight, not a pole to plumb the filthy stream. What need was there for me to explain how the ugly-looking accident had happened—accident or misfortune, whichever it might be? Had Hélène avenged her father? Her jealousy surely was the sword of God. And yet when I looked at the mother I shivered. What fearful ordeal awaited her when she should return to her husband, the judge before whom she must stand all her days? And here with her was an inseparable, incorruptible witness. A child's forehead is transparent, a child's face hides no thoughts, and a lie, like a red flame set within glows out in red that colors even the eyes. But the unhappy woman had not thought as yet of the punishment awaiting her at home; she was staring into the Bièvre.

Such an event must inevitably send ghastly echoes through a woman's life, and here is one of the most terrible of the reverberations that troubled Julie's love from time to time.

Several years had gone by. The Marquis de Vandenesse wore mourning for his father, and succeeded to his estates. One evening, therefore, after dinner it happened that a notary was present in his house. This was no pettifogging lawyer after Sterne's pattern, but a very solid, substantial notary of Paris, one of your estimable men who do a stupid thing pompously, set down a foot heavily upon your private corn, and then ask what in the world there is to cry out about? If, by accident, they come to know the full extent of the enormity, "Upon my word," cry they, "I hadn't a no-

tion!" This was a well-intentioned ass, in short, who could see nothing in life but deeds and documents.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining with M. de Vandenesse; her husband had excused himself before dinner was over, for he was taking his two children to the play. They were to go to some Boulevard theatre or other, to the Ambigu-Comique or the Gaieté, sensational melodrama being judged harmless here in Paris, and suitable pabulum for childhood, because innocence is always triumphant in the fifth act. The boy and girl had teased their father to be there before the curtain rose, so he had left the table before dessert was served.

But the notary, the imperturbable notary, utterly incapable of asking himself why Mme. d'Aiglemont should have allowed her husband and children to go without her to the play, sat on as if he were screwed to his chair. Dinner was over, dessert had been prolonged by discussion, and coffee delayed. All these things consumed time, doubtless precious, and drew impatient movements from that charming woman; she looked not unlike a thoroughbred pawing the ground before a race; but the man of law, to whom horses and women were equally unknown quantities, simply thought the Marquise a very lively and sparkling personage. So enchanted was he to be in the company of a woman of fashion and a political celebrity, that he was exerting himself to shine in conversation, and taking the lady's forced smile for approbation, talked on with unflagging spirit, till the Marquise was almost out of patience.

The master of the house, in concert with the lady, had more than once maintained an eloquent silence when the lawyer expected a civil reply; but these significant pauses were employed by the talkative nuisance in looking for anecdotes in the fire. M. de Vandenesse had recourse to his watch; the charming Marquise tried the experiment of fastening her bonnet strings, and made as if she would go. But she did not go, and the notary, blind and deaf, and delighted with

himself, was quite convinced that his interesting conversational powers were sufficient to keep the lady on the spot.

"I shall certainly have that woman for a client," said he to himself.

Meanwhile the Marquise stood, putting on her gloves, twisting her fingers, looking from the equally impatient Marquis de Vandenesse to the lawyer, still pounding away. At every pause in the worthy man's fire of witticisms the charming pair heaved a sigh of relief, and their looks said plainly, "At last! He is really going!"

Nothing of the kind. It was a nightmare which could only end in exasperating the two impassioned creatures, on whom the lawyer had something of the fascinating effect of a snake on a pair of birds; before long they would be driven to cut him short.

The clever notary was giving them the history of the discreditable ways in which one du Tillet (a stockbroker then much in favor) had laid the foundations of his fortune; all the ins and outs of the whole disgraceful business were accurately put before them; and the narrator was in the very middle of his tale when M. de Vandenesse heard the clock strike nine. Then it became clear to him that his legal adviser was very emphatically an idiot who must be sent forthwith about his business. He stopped him resolutely with a gesture.

"The tongs, my lord Marquis?" queried the notary, handing the object in question to his client.

"No, monsieur, I am compelled to send you away. Mme. d'Aiglemont wishes to join her children, and I shall have the honor of escorting her."

"Nine o'clock already! Time goes like a shadow in pleasant company," said the man of law, who had talked on end for the past hour.

He looked for his hat, planted himself before the fire, with a suppressed hiccough; and, without heeding the Marquise's withering glances, spoke once more to his impatient client:

"To sum up, my lord Marquis. Business before all things. To-morrow, then, we must subpœna your brother; we will proceed to make out the inventory, and faith, after that——"

So ill had the lawyer understood his instructions, that his impression was the exact opposite to the one intended. It was a delicate matter, and Vandenesse, in spite of himself, began to put the thick-headed notary right. The discussion which followed took up a certain amount of time.

"Listen," the diplomatist said at last at a sign from the lady, "you are puzzling my brains; come back to-morrow at nine o'clock, and bring my solicitor with you."

"But as I have the honor of observing, my lord Marquis, we are not certain of finding M. Desroches to-morrow, and if the writ is not issued by noon to-morrow, the days of grace will expire, and then——"

As he spoke, a carriage entered the courtyard. The poor woman turned sharply away at the sound to hide the tears in her eyes. The Marquis rang to give the servant orders to say that he was not at home; but before the footman could answer the bell, the lady's husband reappeared. He had returned unexpectedly from the Gaieté, and held both children by the hand. The little girl's eyes were red; the boy was fretful and very cross.

"What can have happened?" asked the Marquise.

"I will tell you by and by," said the General, and catching a glimpse through an open door of newspapers on the table in the adjoining sitting-room, he went off. The Marquise, at the end of her patience, flung herself down on the sofa in desperation. The notary, thinking it incumbent upon him to be amiable with the children, spoke to the little boy in an insinuating tone:

"Well, my little man, and what is there on at the theatre?"

"The Valley of the Torrent," said Gustave sulkily.

"Upon my word and honor," declared the notary, "authors nowadays are half crazy. *The Valley of the Torrent!* Why not the Torrent of the Valley? It is conceivable that a valley

might be without a torrent in it; now if they had said the Torrent of the Valley, that would have been something clear, something precise, something definite and comprehensible. But never mind that. Now, how is a drama to take place in a torrent and in a valley? You will tell me that in these days the principal attraction lies in the scenic effect, and the title is a capital advertisement.—And did you enjoy it, my little friend?" he continued, sitting down before the child.

When the notary pursued his inquiries as to the possibilities of a drama in the bed of a torrent, the little girl turned slowly away and began to cry. Her mother did not notice this in her intense annoyance.

"Oh! yes, monsieur, I enjoyed it very much," said the child. "There was a dear little boy in the play, and he was all alone in the world, because his papa could not have been his real papa. And when he came to the top of the bridge over the torrent, a big, naughty man with a beard, dressed all in black, came and threw him into the water. And then Hélène began to sob and cry, and everybody scolded us, and father brought us away quick, quick——"

M. de Vandenesse and the Marquise looked on in dull amazement, as if all power to think or move had been suddenly paralyzed.

"Do be quiet, Gustave!" cried the General. "I told you that you were not to talk about anything that happened at the play, and you have forgotten what I said already."

"Oh, my lord Marquis, your lordship must excuse him," cried the notary. "I ought not to have asked questions, but I had no idea——"

"He ought not to have answered them," said the General, looking sternly at the child.

It seemed that the Marquise and the master of the house both perfectly understood why the children had come back so suddenly. Mme. d'Aiglemont looked at her daughter, and rose as if to go to her, but a terrible convulsion passed over her face, and all that could be read in it was relentless severity.

"That will do, Hélène," she said. "Go into the other room, and leave off crying."

"What can she have done, poor child!" asked the notary, thinking to appease the mother's anger and to stop Hélène's tears at one stroke. "So pretty as she is, she must be as good as can be; never anything but a joy to her mother, I will be bound. Isn't that so, my little girl?"

Hélène cowered, looked at her mother, dried her eyes, struggled for composure, and took refuge in the next room.

"And you, madame, are too good a mother not to love all your children alike. You are too good a woman, besides, to have any of those lamentable preferences which have such fatal effects, as we lawyers have only too much reason to know. Society goes through our hands; we see its passions in that most revolting form, greed. Here it is the mother of a family trying to disinherit her husband's children to enrich the others whom she loves better; or it is the husband who tries to leave all his property to the child who has done his best to earn his mother's hatred. And then begin quarrels, and fears, and deeds, and defeasances, and sham sales, and trusts, and all the rest of it; a pretty mess, in fact, it is pitiable, upon my honor, pitiable! There are fathers that will spend their whole lives in cheating their children and robbing their wives. Yes, robbing is the only word for it. We were talking of tragedy; oh! I can assure you of this, that if we were at liberty to tell the real reasons of some donations that I know of, our modern dramatists would have the material for some sensational *bourgeois* dramas. How the wife manages to get her way, as she invariably does, I cannot think; for in spite of appearances, and in spite of their weakness, it is always the women who carry the day. Ah! by the way, they don't take *me* in. I always know the reason at the bottom of those predilections which the world politely styles 'unaccountable.' But in justice to the husbands, I must say that *they* never discover anything. You will tell me that this is a merciful dispens——"

Hélène had come back to the drawing-room with her

father, and was listening attentively. So well did she understand all that was said, that she gave her mother a frightened glance, feeling, with a child's quick instinct, that these remarks would aggravate the punishment hanging over her. The Marquise turned her white face to Vandenesse; and, with terror in her eyes, indicated her husband, who stood with his eyes fixed absently on the flower pattern of the carpet. The diplomatist, accomplished man of the world though he was, could no longer contain his wrath, he gave the man of law a withering glance.

"Step this way, sir," he said, and he went hurriedly to the door of the ante-chamber; the notary left his sentence half finished, and followed, quaking, and the husband and wife were left together.

"Now, sir," said the Marquis de Vandenesse—he banged the drawing-room door, and spoke with concentrated rage—"ever since dinner you have done nothing but make blunders and talk folly. For heaven's sake, go. You will make the most frightful mischief before you have done. If you are a clever man in your profession, keep to your profession; and if by any chance you should go into society, endeavor to be more circumspect."

With that he went back to the drawing-room, and did not even wish the notary good-evening. For a moment that worthy stood dumfounded, bewildered, utterly at a loss. Then, when the buzzing in his ears subsided, he thought he heard some one moaning in the next room. Footsteps came and went, and bells were violently rung. He was by no means anxious to meet the Marquis again, and found the use of his legs to make good his escape, only to run against a hurrying crowd of servants at the door.

"Just the way with all these grand folk," said he to himself outside in the street as he looked about for a cab. "They lead you on to talk with compliments, and you think you are amusing them. Not a bit of it. They treat you insolently; put you at a distance; even put you out at the door without scruple. After all, I talked very cleverly, I said

nothing but what was sensible, well turned, and discreet; and, upon my word, he advises me to be more circumspect in future. I will take good care of that! Eh! the mischief take it! I am a notary and a member of my chamber!—Pshaw! it was an ambassador's fit of temper, nothing is sacred for people of that kind. To-morrow he shall explain what he meant by saying that I had done nothing but blunder and talk nonsense in his house. I will ask him for an explanation—that is, I will ask him to explain my mistake. After all is done and said, I am in the wrong perhaps—— Upon my word, it is very good of me to cudgel my brains like this. What business is it of mine?"

So the notary went home and laid the enigma before his spouse, with a complete account of the evening's events related in sequence.

And she replied, "My dear Crottat, His Excellency was perfectly right when he said that you had done nothing but blunder and talk folly."

"Why?"

"My dear, if I told you why, it would not prevent you from doing the same thing somewhere else to-morrow. I tell you again—talk of nothing but business when you go out; that is my advice to you."

"If you will not tell me, I shall ask him to-morrow——"

"Why, dear me! the veriest noodle is careful to hide a thing of that kind, and do you suppose that an ambassador will tell you about it? Really, Crottat, I have never known you so utterly devoid of common-sense."

"Thank you, my dear."

V.

TWO MEETINGS

One of Napoleon's orderly staff-officers, who shall be known in this history only as the General or the Marquis, had come to spend the spring at Versailles. He had made a large for-

tune under the Restoration; and as his place at Court would not allow him to go very far from Paris, he had taken a country house between the church and the barrier of Montreuil, on the road that leads to the Avenue de Saint-Cloud.

The house had been built originally as a retreat for the short-lived loves of some *grand seigneur.* The grounds were very large; the gardens on either side extending from the first houses of Montreuil to the thatched cottages near the barrier, so that the owner could enjoy all the pleasures of solitude with the city almost at his gates. By an odd piece of contradiction, the whole front of the house itself, with the principal entrance, gave directly upon the street. Perhaps in time past it was a tolerably lonely road, and indeed this theory looks all the more probable when one comes to think of it; for not so very far away, on this same road, Louis Quinze built a delicious summer villa for Mlle. de Romans, and the curious in such things will discover that the wayside *casinos* are adorned in a style that recalls traditions of the ingenious taste displayed in debauchery by our ancestors who, with all the license laid to their charge, sought to invest it with secrecy and mystery.

One winter evening the family were by themselves in the lonely house. The servants had received permission to go to Versailles to celebrate the wedding of one of their number. It was Christmas time, and the holiday makers, presuming upon the double festival, did not scruple to outstay their leave of absence; yet, as the General was well known to be a man of his word, the culprits felt some twinges of conscience as they danced on after the hour of return. The clocks struck eleven, and still there was no sign of the servants.

A deep silence prevailed over the country-side, broken only by the sound of the northeast wind whistling through the black branches, wailing about the house, dying in gusts along the corridors. The hard frost had purified the air, and held the earth in its grip; the roads gave back every sound with the hard metallic ring which always strikes us with a new

surprise; the heavy footsteps of some belated reveler, or a cab returning to Paris, could be heard for a long distance with unwonted distinctness. Out in the courtyard a few dead leaves set a-dancing by some eddying gust found a voice for the night which fain had been silent. It was, in fact, one of those sharp, frosty evenings that wring barren expressions of pity from our selfish ease for wayfarers and the poor, and fills us with a luxurious sense of the comfort of the fireside.

But the family party in the salon at that hour gave not a thought to absent servants nor houseless folk, nor to the gracious charm with which a winter evening sparkles. No one played the philosopher out of season. Secure in the protection of an old soldier, women and children gave themselves up to the joys of home life, so delicious when there is no restraint upon feeling; and talk and play and glances are bright with frankness and affection.

The General sat, or more properly speaking, lay buried, in the depths of a huge, high-back armchair by the hearth. The heaped-up fire burned scorching clear with the excessive cold of the night. The good father leaned his head slightly to one side against the back of the chair, in the indolence of perfect serenity and a glow of happiness. The languid, half-sleepy droop of his outstretched arms seemed to complete his expression of placid content. He was watching his youngest, a boy of five or thereabouts, who, half clad as he was, declined to allow his mother to undress him. The little one fled from the night-gown and cap with which he was threatened now and again, and stoutly declined to part with his embroidered collar, laughing when his mother called to him, for he saw that she too was laughing at this declaration of infant independence. The next step was to go back to a game of romps with his sister. She was as much a child as he, but more mischievous; and she was older by two years, and could speak distinctly already, whereas his inarticulate words and confused ideas were a puzzle even to his parents. Little Moïna's playfulness, somewhat coquettish already, pro-

voked inextinguishable laughter, explosions of merriment which went off like fireworks for no apparent cause. As they tumbled about before the fire, unconcernedly displaying little plump bodies and delicate white contours, as the dark and golden curls mingled in a collision of rosy cheeks dimpled with childish glee, a father surely, a mother most certainly, must have understood those little souls, and seen the character and power of passion already developed for their eyes. As the cherubs frolicked about, struggling, rolling, and tumbling without fear of hurt on the soft carpet, its flowers looked pale beside the glowing white and red of their cheeks and the brilliant color of their shining eyes.

On the sofa by the fire, opposite the great armchair, the children's mother sat among a heap of scattered garments, with a little scarlet shoe in her hand. She seemed to have given herself up completely to the enjoyment of the moment; wavering discipline had relaxed into a sweet smile engraved upon her lips. At the age of six-and-thirty, or thereabouts, she was a beautiful woman still, by reason of the rare perfection of the outlines of her face, and at this moment light and warmth and happiness filled it with preternatural brightness.

Again and again her eyes wandered from her children, and their tender gaze was turned upon her husband's grave face; and now and again the eyes of husband and wife met with a silent exchange of happiness and thoughts from some inner depth.

The General's face was deeply bronzed, a stray lock of gray hair scored shadows on his forehead. The reckless courage of the battlefield could be read in the lines carved in his hollow cheeks, and gleams of rugged strength in the blue eyes; clearly the bit of red ribbon flaunting at his buttonhole had been paid for by hardship and toil. An inexpressible kindliness and frankness shone out of the strong, resolute face which reflected his children's merriment; the gray-haired captain found it not so very hard to become a child

again. Is there not always a little love of children in the heart of a soldier who has seen enough of the seamy side of life to know something of the piteous limitations of strength and the privileges of weakness?

At a round table rather further away, in a circle of bright lamplight that dimmed the feebler illumination of the wax candles on the chimney-piece, sat a boy of thirteen, rapidly turning the pages of a thick volume which he was reading, undisturbed by the shouts of the children. There was a boy's curiosity in his face. From his *lycéens* uniform he was evidently a schoolboy, and the book he was reading was the *Arabian Nights.* Small wonder that he was deeply absorbed. He sat perfectly still in a meditative attitude, with his elbow on the table, and his hand propping his head—the white fingers contrasting strongly with the brown hair into which they were thrust. As he sat, with the light turned full upon his face, and the rest of his body in shadow, he looked like one of Raphael's dark portraits of himself—a bent head and intent eyes filled with visions of the future.

Between the table and the Marquise a tall, beautiful girl sat at her tapestry frame; sometimes she drew back from her work, sometimes she bent over it, and her hair, picturesque in its ebony smoothness and darkness, caught the light of the lamp. Hélène was a picture in herself. In her beauty there was a rare distinctive character of power and refinement. Though her hair was gathered up and drawn back from her face, so as to trace a clearly marked line about her head, so thick and abundant was it, so recalcitrant to the comb, that it sprang back in curl-tendrils to the nape of her neck. The bountiful line of eyebrows was evenly marked out in dark contrasting outline upon her pure forehead. On her upper lip, beneath the Grecian nose with its sensitively perfect curve of nostril, there lay a faint, swarthy shadow, the sign-manual of courage; but the enchanting roundness of contour, the frankly innocent expression of her other features, the transparence of the delicate carnations, the voluptuous softness of the lips, the flawless oval of the out-

line of the face, and with these, and more than all these, the saintlike expression in the girlish eyes, gave to her vigorous loveliness the distinctive touch of feminine grace, that enchanting modesty which we look for in these angels of peace and love. Yet there was no suggestion of fragility about her; and, surely, with so grand a woman's frame, so attractive a face, she must possess a corresponding warmth of heart and strength of soul.

She was as silent as her schoolboy brother. Seemingly a prey to the fateful maiden meditations which baffle a father's penetration and even a mother's sagacity, it was impossible to be certain whether it was the lamplight that cast those shadows that flitted over her face like thin clouds over a bright sky, or whether they were passing shades of secret and painful thoughts.

Husband and wife had quite forgotten the two older children at that moment, though now and again the General's questioning glance traveled to that second mute picture; a larger growth, a gracious realization, as it were, of the hopes embodied in the baby forms rioting in the foreground. Their faces made up a kind of living poem, illustrating life's various phases. The luxurious background of the salon, the different attitudes, the strong contrasts of coloring in the faces, differing with the character of differing ages, the modeling of the forms brought into high relief by the light—altogether it was a page of human life, richly illuminated beyond the art of painter, sculptor, or poet. Silence, solitude, night and winter lent a final touch of majesty to complete the simplicity and sublimity of this exquisite effect of nature's contriving. Married life is full of these sacred hours, which perhaps owe their indefinable charm to some vague memory of a better world. A divine radiance surely shines upon them, the destined compensation for some portion of earth's sorrows, the solace which enables man to accept life. We seem to behold a vision of an enchanted universe, the great conception of its system widens out before our eyes, and social life pleads for its laws by bidding us look to the future.

Yet in spite of the tender glances that Hélène gave Abel and Moïna after a fresh outburst of merriment; in spite of the look of gladness in her transparent face whenever she stole a glance at her father, a deep melancholy pervaded her gestures, her attitude, and more than all, her eyes veiled by their long lashes. Those white, strong hands, through which the light passed, tinting them with a diaphanous almost fluid red—those hands were trembling. Once only did the eyes of the mother and daughter clash without shrinking, and the two women read each other's thoughts in a look, cold, wan, and respectful on Hélène's part, sombre and threatening on her mother's. At once Hélène's eyes were lowered to her work, she plied her needle swiftly, and it was long before she raised her head, bowed as it seemed by a weight of thought too heavy to bear. Was the Marquise over harsh with this one of her children? Did she think this harshness needful? Was she jealous of Hélène's beauty?—She might still hope to rival Hélène, but only by the magic arts of the toilette. Or again, had her daughter, like many a girl who reaches the clairvoyant age, read the secrets which this wife (to all appearance so religiously faithful in the fulfilment of her duties) believed to be buried in her own heart as deeply as in a grave?

Hélène had reached an age when purity of soul inclines to pass over-rigid judgments. A certain order of mind is apt to exaggerate transgression into crime; imagination reacts upon conscience, and a young girl is a hard judge because she magnifies the seriousness of the offence. Hélène seemed to think herself worthy of no one. Perhaps there was a secret in her past life, perhaps something had happened, unintelligible to her at the time, but with gradually developing significance for a mind grown susceptible to religious influences; something which lately seemed to have degraded her, as it were, in her own eyes, and according to her own romantic standard. This change in her demeanor dated from the day of reading Schiller's noble tragedy of *Wilhelm Tell* in a new series of translations. Her mother

scolded her for letting the book fall, and then remarked to herself that the passage which had so worked on Hélène's feelings was the scene in which Wilhelm Tell, who spilt the blood of a tyrant to save a nation, fraternizes in some sort with John the Parricide. Hélène had grown humble, dutiful, and self-contained; she no longer cared for gaiety. Never had she made so much of her father, especially when the Marquise was not by to watch her girlish caresses. And yet, if Hélène's affection for her mother had cooled at all, the change in her manner was so slight as to be almost imperceptible; so slight that the General could not have noticed it, jealous though he might be of the harmony of home. No masculine insight could have sounded the depths of those two feminine natures; the one was young and generous, the other sensitive and proud; the first had a wealth of indulgence in her nature, the second was full of craft and love. If the Marquise made her daughter's life a burden to her by a woman's subtle tyranny, it was a tyranny invisible to all but the victim; and for the rest, these conjectures only called forth after the event must remain conjectures. Until this night no accusing flash of light had escaped either of them, but an ominous mystery was too surely growing up between them, a mystery known only to themselves and God.

"Come, Abel," called the Marquise, seizing on her opportunity when the children were tired of play and still for a moment. "Come, come, child; you must be put to bed——"

And with a glance that must be obeyed, she caught him up and took him on her knee.

"What!" exclaimed the General. "Half-past ten o'clock, and not one of the servants has come back! The rascals!—Gustave," he added, turning to his son, "I allowed you to read that book only on the condition that you should put it away at ten o'clock. You ought to have shut up the book at the proper time and gone to bed, as you promised. If you mean to make your mark in the world, you must keep your word; let it be a second religion to you, and a point of honor. Fox, one of the greatest of English orators, was remarkable, above

all things, for the beauty of his character, and the very first of his qualities was the scrupulous faithfulness with which he kept his engagements. When he was a child, his father (an Englishman of the old school) gave him a pretty strong lesson which he never forgot. Like most rich Englishmen, Fox's father had a country house and a considerable park about it. Now, in the park there was an old summer-house, and orders had been given that this summer-house was to be pulled down and put up somewhere else where there was a finer view. Fox was just about your age, and had come home for the holidays. Boys are fond of seeing things pulled to pieces, so young Fox asked to stay on at home for a few days longer to see the old summer-house taken down; but his father said that he must go back to school on the proper day, so there was anger between father and son. Fox's mother (like all mammas) took the boy's part. Then the father solemnly promised that the summer-house should stay where it was till the next holidays.

"So Fox went back to school; and his father, thinking that lessons would soon drive the whole thing out of the boy's mind, had the summer-house pulled down and put up in the new position. But as it happened, the persistent youngster thought of nothing but that summer-house; and as soon as he came home again, his first care was to go out to look at the old building, and he came in to breakfast looking quite doleful, and said to his father, 'You have broken your promise.' The old English gentleman said with confusion full of dignity, 'That is true, my boy; but I will make amends. A man ought to think of keeping his word before he thinks of his fortune; for by keeping to his word he will gain fortune, while all the fortunes in the world will not efface the stain left on your conscience by a breach of faith.' Then he gave orders that the summer-house should be put up again in the old place, and when it had been rebuilt he had it taken down again for his son to see. Let this be a lesson to *you,* Gustave."

Gustave had been listening with interest, and now he

closed the book at once. There was a moment's silence, while the General took possession of Moïna, who could scarcely keep her eyes open. The little one's languid head fell back on her father's breast, and in a moment she was fast asleep, wrapped round about in her golden curls.

Just then a sound of hurrying footsteps rang on the pavement out in the street, immediately followed by three knocks on the street door, waking the echoes of the house. The reverberating blows told, as plainly as a cry for help, that here was a man flying for his life. The house dog barked furiously. A thrill of excitement ran through Hélène and Gustave and the General and his wife; but neither Abel, with the night-cap strings just tied under his chin, nor Moïna awoke.

"The fellow is in a hurry!" exclaimed the General. He put the little girl down on the chair, and hastened out of the room, heedless of his wife's entreating cry, "Dear, do not go down——"

He stepped into his own room for a pair of pistols, lighted a dark lantern, sprang at lightning speed down the staircase, and in another minute reached the house door, his oldest boy fearlessly following.

"Who is there?" demanded he.

"Let me in," panted a breathless voice.

"Are you a friend?"

"Yes, friend."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes! But let me in; *they* are after me!"

The General had scarcely set the door ajar before a man slipped into the porch with the uncanny swiftness of a shadow. Before the master of the house could prevent him, the intruder had closed the door with a well-directed kick, and set his back against it resolutely, as if he were determined that it should not be opened again. In a moment the General had his lantern and pistol at a level with the stranger's breast, and beheld a man of medium height in a fur-lined pelisse. It was an old man's garment, both too

large and too long for its present wearer. Chance or caution had slouched the man's hat over his eyes.

"You can lower your pistol, sir," said this person. "I do not claim to stay in your house against your will; but if I leave it, death is waiting for me at the barrier. And what a death! You would be answerable to God for it! I ask for your hospitality for two hours. And bear this in mind, sir, that, suppliant as I am, I have a right to command with the despotism of necessity. I want the Arab's hospitality. Either I and my secret must be inviolable, or open the door and I will go to my death. I want secrecy, a safe hiding-place, and water. Oh! water!" he cried again, with a rattle in his throat.

"Who are you?" demanded the General, taken aback by the stranger's feverish volubility.

"Ah! who am I? Good, open the door, and I will put a distance between us," retorted the other, and there was a diabolical irony in his tone.

Dexterously as the Marquis passed the light of the lantern over the man's face, he could only see the lower half of it, and that in nowise prepossessed him in favor of this singular claimant of hospitality. The cheeks were livid and quivering, the features dreadfully contorted. Under the shadow of the hat-brim a pair of eyes gleamed out like flames; the feeble candle-light looked almost dim in comparison. Some sort of answer must be made however.

"Your language, sir, is so extraordinary that in my place you yourself——"

"My life is in your hands!" the intruder broke in. The sound of his voice was dreadful to hear.

"Two hours?" said the Marquis, wavering.

"Two hours," echoed the other.

Then quite suddenly, with a desperate gesture, he pushed back his hat and left his forehead bare, and, as if he meant to try a final expedient, he gave the General a glance that seemed to plunge like a vivid flash into his very soul. That electrical discharge of intelligence and will was swift as light-

ning and crushing as a thunderbolt; for there are moments when a human being is invested for a brief space with inexplicable power.

"Come, whoever you may be, you shall be in safety under my roof," the master of the house said gravely at last, acting, as he imagined, upon one of those intuitions which a man cannot always explain to himself.

"God will repay you!" said the stranger, with a deep, involuntary sigh.

"Have you weapons?" asked the General.

For all answer the stranger flung open his fur pelisse, and scarcely gave the other time for a glance before he wrapped it about him again. To all appearance he was unarmed and in evening dress. Swift as the soldier's scrutiny had been, he saw something, however, which made him exclaim:

"Where the devil have you been to get yourself in such a mess in such dry weather?"

"More questions!" said the stranger haughtily.

At the words the Marquis caught sight of his son, and his own late homily on the strict fulfilment of a given word came up in his mind. In lively vexation, he exclaimed, not without a touch of anger:

"What! little rogue, you here when you ought to be in bed?"

"Because I thought I might be of some good in danger," answered Gustave.

"There, go up to your room," said his father, mollified by the reply.—"And you" (addressing the stranger), "come with me."

The two men grew as silent as a pair of gamblers who watch each other's play with mutual suspicions. The General himself began to be troubled with ugly presentiments. The strange visit weighed upon his mind already like a nightmare; but he had passed his word, there was no help for it now, and he led the way along the passages and stairways till they reached a large room on the second floor immediately above the salon. This was an empty room where linen was

dried in the winter. It had but the one door, and for all decoration boasted one solitary shabby looking-glass above the chimney-piece, left by the previous owner, and a great pier glass, placed provisionally opposite the fireplace until such time as a use should be found for it in the rooms below. The four yellowish walls were bare. The floor had never been swept. The huge attic was icy-cold, and the furniture consisted of a couple of rickety straw-bottomed chairs, or rather frames of chairs. The General set the lantern down upon the chimney-piece. Then he spoke:

"It is necessary for your own safety to hide you in this comfortless attic. And, as you have my promise to keep your secret, you will permit me to lock you in."

The other bent his head in acquiescence.

"I asked for nothing but a hiding-place, secrecy, and water," returned he.

"I will bring you some directly," said the Marquis, shutting the door cautiously. He groped his way down into the salon for a lamp before going to the kitchen to look for a carafe.

"Well, what is it?" the Marquise asked quickly.

"Nothing, dear," he returned coolly.

"But we listened, and we certainly heard you go upstairs with somebody."

"Hélène," said the General, and he looked at his daughter, who raised her face, "bear in mind that your father's honor depends upon your discretion. You must have heard nothing."

The girl bent her head in answer. The Marquise was confused and smarting inwardly at the way in which her husband had thought fit to silence her.

Meanwhile the General went for the bottle and a tumbler, and returned to the room above. His prisoner was leaning against the chimney-piece, his head was bare, he had flung down his hat on one of the two chairs. Evidently he had not expected to have so bright a light turned upon him, and he frowned and looked anxious as he met the General's keen

eyes; but his face softened and wore a gracious expression as he thanked his protector. When the latter placed the bottle and glass on the mantel-shelf, the stranger's eyes flashed out on him again; and when he spoke, it was in musical tones with no sign of the previous guttural convulsion, though his voice was still unsteady with repressed emotion.

"I shall seem to you to be a strange being, sir, but you must pardon the caprices of necessity. If you propose to remain in the room, I beg that you will not look at me while I am drinking."

Vexed at this continual obedience to a man whom he disliked, the General sharply turned his back upon him. The stranger thereupon drew a white handkerchief from his pocket and wound it about his right hand. Then he seized the carafe and emptied it at a draught. The Marquis, staring vacantly into the tall mirror across the room, without a thought of breaking his implicit promise, saw the stranger's figure distinctly reflected by the opposite looking-glass, and saw, too, a red stain suddenly appear through the folds of the white bandage. The man's hands were steeped in blood.

"Ah! you saw me!" cried the other. He had drunk off the water and wrapped himself again in his cloak, and now scrutinized the General suspiciously. "It is all over with me! Here they come!"

"I don't hear anything," said the Marquis.

"You have not the same interest that I have in listening for sounds in the air."

"You have been fighting a duel, I suppose, to be in such a state?" queried the General, not a little disturbed by the color of those broad, dark patches staining his visitor's cloak.

"Yes, a duel; you have it," said the other, and a bitter smile flitted over his lips.

As he spoke a sound rang along the distant road, a sound of galloping horses; but so faint as yet, that it was the merest dawn of a sound. The General's trained ear recognized the advance of a troop of regulars.

"That is the gendarmerie," said he.

He glanced at his prisoner to reassure him after his own involuntary indiscretion, took the lamp, and went down to the salon. He had scarcely laid the key of the room above upon the chimney-piece when the hoof beats sounded louder, and came swiftly nearer and nearer the house. The General felt a shiver of excitement, and indeed the horses stopped at the house door; a few words were exchanged among the men, and one of them dismounted and knocked loudly. There was no help for it; the General went to open the door. He could scarcely conceal his inward perturbation at the sight of half a dozen gendarmes outside, the metal rims of their caps gleaming like silver in the moonlight.

"My lord," said the corporal, "have you heard a man run past towards the barrier within the last few minutes?"

"Towards the barrier? No."

"Have you opened the door to any one?"

"Now, am I in the habit of answering the door myself——"

"I ask your pardon, General, but just now it seems to me that——"

"Really!" cried the Marquis wrathfully. "Have you a mind to try joking with me? What right have you——?"

"None at all, none at all, my lord," cried the corporal, hastily putting in a soft answer. "You will excuse our zeal. We know, of course, that a peer of France is not likely to harbor a murderer at this time of night; but as we want any information we can get——"

"A murderer!" cried the General. "Who can have been——"

"M. le Baron de Mauny has just been murdered. It was a blow from an axe, and we are in hot pursuit of the criminal. We know for certain that he is somewhere in this neighborhood, and we shall hunt him down. By your leave, General," and the man swung himself into the saddle as he spoke. It was well that he did so, for a corporal of gendarmerie trained to alert observation and quick surmise would have had his suspicions at once if he had caught sight of the General's

face. Everything that passed through the soldier's mind was faithfully revealed in his frank countenance.

"Is it known who the murderer is?" asked he.

"No," said the other, now in the saddle. "He left the bureau full of banknotes and gold untouched."

"It was revenge, then," said the Marquis.

"On an old man? pshaw! No, no, the fellow hadn't time to take it, that was all," and the corporal galloped after his comrades, who were almost out of sight by this time.

For a few minutes the General stood, a victim to perplexities which need no explanation; but in a moment he heard the servants returning home, their voices were raised in some sort of dispute at the cross-roads of Montreuil. When they came in, he gave vent to his feelings in an explosion of rage, his wrath fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and all the echoes of the house trembled at the sound of his voice. In the midst of the storm his own man, the boldest and cleverest of the party, brought out an excuse; they had been stopped, he said, by the gendarmerie at the gate of Montreuil, a murder had been committed, and the police were in pursuit. In a moment the General's anger vanished, he said not another word; then, bethinking himself of his own singular position, drily ordered them all off to bed at once, and left them amazed at his readiness to accept their fellow servant's lying excuse.

While these incidents took place in the yard, an apparently trifling occurrence had changed the relative positions of three characters in this story. The Marquis had scarcely left the room before his wife looked first towards the key on the mantel-shelf, and then at Hélène; and, after some wavering, bent towards her daughter and said in a low voice, "Hélène, your father has left the key on the chimney-piece."

The girl looked up in surprise and glanced timidly at her mother. The Marquise's eyes sparkled with curiosity.

"Well, mamma?" she said, and her voice had a troubled ring.

"I should like to know what is going on upstairs. If

there is anybody up there, he has not stirred yet. Just go up——"

"*I?*" cried the girl, with something like horror in her tones.

"Are you afraid?"

"No, mamma, but I thought I heard a man's footsteps."

"If I could go myself, I should not have asked you to go, Hélène," said her mother with cold dignity. "If your father were to come back and did not see me, he would go to look for me perhaps, but he would not notice your absence."

"Madame, if you bid me go, I will go," said Hélène, "but I shall lose my father's good opinion——"

"What is this!" cried the Marquise in a sarcastic tone. "But since you take a thing that was said in joke in earnest, I now *order* you to go upstairs and see who is in the room above. Here is the key, child. When your father told you to say nothing about this thing that happened, he did not forbid you to go up to the room. Go at once—and learn that a daughter ought never to judge her mother."

The last words were spoken with all the severity of a justly offended mother. The Marquise took the key and handed it to Hélène, who rose without a word and left the room.

"My mother can always easily obtain her pardon," thought the girl; "but as for me, my father will never think the same of me again. Does she mean to rob me of his tenderness? Does she want to turn me out of his house?"

These were thoughts that set her imagination in a sudden ferment, as she went down the dark passage to the mysterious door at the end. When she stood before it, her mental confusion grew to a fateful pitch. Feelings hitherto forced down into inner depths crowded up at the summons of these confused thoughts. Perhaps hitherto she had never believed that a happy life lay before her, but now, in this awful moment, her despair was complete. She shook convulsively as she set the key in the lock; so great indeed was her agitation, that she stopped for a moment and laid her hand on her heart, as if to still the heavy throbs that sounded in her ears. Then she opened the door.

The creaking of the hinges sounded doubtless in vain on the murderer's ears. Acute as were his powers of hearing, he stood as if lost in thought, and so motionless that he might have been glued to the wall against which he leaned. In the circle of semi-opaque darkness, dimly lit by the bull's-eye lantern, he looked like the shadowy figure of some dead knight, standing for ever in his shadowy mortuary niche in the gloom of some Gothic chapel. Drops of cold sweat trickled over the broad, sallow forehead. An incredible fearlessness looked out from every tense feature. His eyes of fire were fixed and tearless; he seemed to be watching some struggle in the darkness beyond him. Stormy thoughts passed swiftly across a face whose firm decision spoke of a character of no common order. His whole person, bearing, and frame bore out the impression of a tameless spirit. The man looked power and strength personified; he stood facing the darkness as if it were the visible image of his own future.

These physical characteristics had made no impression upon the General, familiar as he was with the powerful faces of the group of giants gathered about Napoleon; speculative curiosity, moreover, as to the why and wherefore of the apparition had completely filled his mind; but Hélène, with feminine sensitiveness to surface impressions, was struck by the blended chaos of light and darkness, grandeur and passion, suggesting a likeness between this stranger and Lucifer recovering from his fall. Suddenly the storm apparent in his face was stilled as if by magic; and the indefinable power to sway which the stranger exercised upon others, and perhaps unconsciously and as by reflex action upon himself, spread its influence about him with the progressive swiftness of a flood. A torrent of thought rolled away from his brow as his face resumed its ordinary expression. Perhaps it was the strangeness of this meeting, or perhaps it was the mystery into which she had penetrated, that held the young girl spellbound in the doorway, so that she could look at a face pleasant to behold and full of interest. For some moments she stood in the magical silence; a trouble had come upon her never known

before in her young life. Perhaps some exclamation broke from Hélène, perhaps she moved unconsciously; or it may be that the hunted criminal returned of his own accord from the world of ideas to the material world, and heard some one breathing in the room; however it was, he turned his head towards his host's daughter, and saw dimly in the shadow a noble face and queenly form, which he must have taken for an angel's, so motionless she stood, so vague and like a spirit.

"Monsieur . . ." a trembling voice cried.

The murderer trembled.

"A woman!" he cried under his breath. "Is it possible? Go," he cried, "I deny that any one has a right to pity, to absolve, or condemn me. I must live alone. Go, my child," he added, with an imperious gesture, "I should ill requite the service done me by the master of the house if I were to allow a single creature under his roof to breathe the same air with me. I must submit to be judged by the laws of the world."

The last words were uttered in a lower voice. Even as he realized with a profound intuition all the manifold misery awakened by that melancholy thought, the glance that he gave Hélène had something of the power of the serpent, stirring a whole dormant world in the mind of the strange girl before him. To her that glance was like a light revealing unknown lands. She was stricken with strange trouble, helpless, quelled by a magnetic power exerted unconsciously. Trembling and ashamed, she went out and returned to the salon. She had scarcely entered the room before her father came back, so that she had not time to say a word to her mother.

The General was wholly absorbed in thought. He folded his arms, and paced silently to and fro between the windows which looked out upon the street and the second row which gave upon the garden. His wife lay the sleeping Abel on her knee, and little Moïna lay in untroubled slumber in the low chair, like a bird in its nest. Her older sister stared into the fire, a skein of silk in one hand, a needle in the other.

Deep silence prevailed, broken only by lagging footsteps on the stairs, as one by one the servants crept away to bed; there was an occasional burst of stifled laughter, a last echo of the wedding festivity, or doors were opened as they still talked among themselves, then shut. A smothered sound came now and again from the bedrooms, a chair fell, the old coachman coughed feebly, then all was silent.

In a little while the dark majesty with which sleeping earth is invested at midnight brought all things under its sway. No lights shone but the light of the stars. The frost gripped the ground. There was not a sound of a voice, nor a living creature stirring. The crackling of the fire only seemed to make the depth of the silence more fully felt.

The church clock of Montreuil had just struck one, when an almost inaudible sound of a light footstep came from the second flight of stairs. The Marquis and his daughter, both believing that M. de Mauny's murderer was a prisoner above, thought that one of the maids had come down, and no one was at all surprised to hear the door open in the ante-chamber. Quite suddenly the murderer appeared in their midst. The Marquis himself was sunk in deep musings, the mother and daughter were silent, the one from keen curiosity, the other from sheer astonishment, so that the visitor was almost half-way across the room when he spoke to the General.

"Sir, the two hours are almost over," he said, in a voice that was strangely calm and musical.

"You here!" cried the General. "By what means——?" and he gave wife and daughter a formidable questioning glance. Hélène grew red as fire.

"You!" he went on, in a tone filled with horror. *"You* among us! A murderer covered with blood! You are a blot on this picture! Go, go out!" he added in a burst of rage.

At that word "murderer," the Marquise cried out; as for Hélène, it seemed to mark an epoch in her life, there was not a trace of surprise in her face. She looked as if she had been waiting for this—for him. Those so vast thoughts of

hers had found a meaning. The punishment reserved by Heaven for her sins flamed out before her. In her own eyes she was as great a criminal as this murderer; she confronted him with her quiet gaze; she was his fellow, his sister. It seemed to her that in this accident the command of God had been made manifest. If she had been a few years older, reason would have disposed of her remorse, but at this moment she was like one distraught.

The stranger stood impassive and self-possessed; a scornful smile overspread his features and his thick, red lips.

"You appreciate the magnanimity of my behavior very badly," he said slowly. "I would not touch with my fingers the glass of water you brought me to allay my thirst; I did not so much as think of washing my blood-stained hands under your roof; I am going away, leaving nothing of *my crime*" (here his lips were compressed) "but the memory; I have tried to leave no trace of my presence in this house. Indeed, I would not even allow your daughter to——"

"My daughter!" cried the General, with a horror-stricken glance at Hélène. "Vile wretch, go, or I will kill you——"

"The two hours are not yet over," said the other; "if you kill me or give me up, you must lower yourself in your own eyes—and in mine."

At these last words, the General turned to stare at the criminal in dumb amazement; but he could not endure the intolerable light in those eyes which for the second time disorganized his being. He was afraid of showing weakness once more, conscious as he was that his will was weaker already.

"An old man! You can never have seen a family," he said, with a father's glance at his wife and children.

"Yes, an old man," echoed the stranger, frowning slightly.

"Fly!" cried the General, but he did not dare to look at his guest. "Our compact is broken. I shall not kill you. No! I will never be purveyor to the scaffold. But go out. You make us shudder."

"I know that," said the other patiently. "There is not

a spot on French soil where I can set foot and be safe; but if man's justice, like God's, took all into account, if man's justice deigned to inquire which was the monster—the murderer or his victim—then I might hold up my head among my fellows. Can you not guess that other crimes preceded that blow from an axe? I constituted myself his judge and executioner; I stepped in where man's justice failed. That was my crime. Farewell, sir. Bitter though you have made your hospitality, I shall not forget it. I shall always bear in my heart a feeling of gratitude towards one man in the world, and you are that man. . . . But I could wish that you had showed yourself more generous!"

He turned towards the door, but in the same instant Hélène leaned to whisper something in her mother's ear.

"Ah! . . ."

At the cry that broke from his wife, the General trembled as if he had seen Moïna lying dead. There stood Hélène, and the murderer had turned instinctively, with something like anxiety about these folk in his face.

"What is it, dear?" asked the General.

"Hélène wants to go with him."

The murderer's face flushed.

"If that is how my mother understands an almost involuntary exclamation," Hélène said in a low voice, "I will fulfil her wishes." She glanced about her with something like fierce pride; then the girl's eyes fell, and she stood, admirable in her modesty.

"Hélène, did you go up to the room where——?"

"Yes, father."

"Hélène" (and his voice shook with a convulsive tremor), "is this the first time that you have seen this man?"

"Yes, father."

"Then it is not natural that you should intend to——"

"If it is not natural, father, at any rate it is true."

"Oh! child," said the Marquise, lowering her voice, but not so much but that her husband could hear her, "you are false to all the principles of honor, modesty, and right which

I have tried to cultivate in your heart. If until this fatal hour your life has only been one lie, there is nothing to regret in your loss. It can hardly be the moral perfection of this stranger that attracts you to him? Can it be the kind of power that commits crime? I have too good an opinion of you to suppose that——"

"Oh, suppose everything, madame," Hélène said coldly.

But though her force of character sustained this ordeal, her flashing eyes could scarcely hold the tears that filled them. The stranger, watching her, guessed the mother's language from the girl's tears, and turned his eagle glance upon the Marquise. An irresistible power constrained her to look at this terrible seducer; but as her eyes met his bright, glittering gaze, she felt a shiver run through her frame, such a shock as we feel at the sight of a reptile or the contact of a Leyden jar.

"Dear!" she cried, turning to her husband, "this is the Fiend himself. He can divine everything!"

The General rose to his feet and went to the bell.

"He means ruin for you," Hélène said to the murderer.

The stranger smiled, took one forward stride, grasped the General's arm, and compelled him to endure a steady gaze which benumbed the soldier's brain and left him powerless.

"I will repay you now for your hospitality," he said, "and then we shall be quits. I will spare you the shame by giving myself up. After all, what should I do now with my life?"

"You could repent," answered Hélène, and her glance conveyed such hope as only glows in a young girl's eyes.

"*I shall never repent,*" said the murderer in a sonorous voice, as he raised his head proudly.

"His hands are stained with blood," the father said.

"I will wipe it away," she answered.

"But do you so much as know whether he cares for you?" said her father, not daring now to look at the stranger.

The murderer came up a little nearer. Some light within seemed to glow through Hélène's beauty, grave and maidenly though it was, coloring and bringing into relief, as it were,

the least details, the most delicate lines in her face. The stranger, with that terrible fire still blazing in his eyes, gave one tender glance to her enchanting loveliness, then he spoke, his tones revealing how deeply he had been moved.

"And if I refuse to allow this sacrifice of yourself, and so discharge my debt of two hours of existence to your father; is not this love, love for yourself alone?"

"Then do you too reject me?" Hélène's cry rang painfully through the hearts of all who heard her. "Farewell, then, to you all; I will die."

"What does this mean?" asked the father and mother.

Hélène gave her mother an eloquent glance and lowered her eyes.

Since the first attempt made by the General and his wife to contest by word or action the intruder's strange presumption to the right of staying in their midst, from their first experience of the power of those glittering eyes, a mysterious torpor had crept over them, and their benumbed faculties struggled in vain with a preternatural influence. The air seemed to have suddenly grown so heavy, that they could scarcely breathe; yet, while they could not find the reason of this feeling of oppression, a voice within told them that this magnetic presence was the real cause of their helplessness. In this moral agony, it flashed across the General that he must make every effort to overcome this influence on his daughter's reeling brain; he caught her by the waist and drew her into the embrasure of a window, as far as possible from the murderer.

"Darling," he murmured, "if some wild love has been suddenly born in your heart, I cannot believe that you have not the strength of soul to quell the mad impulse; your innocent life, your pure and dutiful soul, has given me too many proofs of your character. There must be something behind all this. Well, this heart of mine is full of indulgence, you can tell everything to me; even if it breaks, dear child, I can be silent about my grief, and keep your confession a secret. What is it? Are you jealous of our love for your brothers or your

little sister? Is it some love trouble? Are you unhappy here at home? Tell me about it, tell me the reasons that urge you to leave your home, to rob it of its greatest charm, to leave your mother and brothers and your little sister?"

"I am in love with no one, father, and jealous of no one, not even of your friend the diplomatist, M. de Vandenesse."

The Marquise turned pale; her daughter saw this, and stopped short.

"Sooner or later I must live under some man's protection, must I not?"

"That is true."

"Do we ever know," she went on, "the human being to whom we link our destinies? Now, I believe in this man."

"Oh, child," said the General, raising his voice, "you have no idea of all the misery that lies in store for you."

"I am thinking of *his*."

"What a life!" groaned the father.

"A woman's life," the girl murmured.

"You have a great knowledge of life!" exclaimed the Marquise, finding speech at last.

"Madame, my answers are shaped by the questions; but if you desire it, I will speak more clearly."

"Speak out, my child . . . I am a mother."

Mother and daughter looked each other in the face, and the Marquise said no more. At last she said:

"Hélène, if you have any reproaches to make, I would rather bear them than see you go away with a man from whom the whole world shrinks in horror."

"Then you see yourself, madame, that but for me he would be quite alone."

"That will do, madame," the General cried; "we have but one daughter left to us now," and he looked at Moïna, who slept on. "As for you," he added, turning to Hélène, "I will put you in a convent."

"So be it, father," she said, in calm despair, "I shall die there. You are answerable to God alone for my life and for *his* soul."

A deep, sullen silence fell after those words. The onlookers during this strange scene, so utterly at variance with all the sentiments of ordinary life, shunned each other's eyes.

Suddenly the Marquis happened to glance at his pistols. He caught up one of them, cocked the weapon, and pointed it at the intruder. At the click of firearms the other turned his piercing gaze full upon the General; the soldier's arm slackened indescribably and fell heavily to his side. The pistol dropped to the floor.

"Girl, you are free," said he, exhausted by this ghastly struggle. "Kiss your mother, if she will let you kiss her. For my own part, I wish never to see nor to hear of you again."

"Hélène," the mother began, "only think of the wretched life before you."

A sort of rattling sound came from the intruder's deep chest, all eyes were turned to him. Disdain was plainly visible in his face.

The General rose to his feet. "My hospitality has cost me dear," he cried. "Before you came you had taken an old man's life; now you are dealing a deadly blow at a whole family. Whatever happens, there must be unhappiness in this house."

"And if your daughter is happy?" asked the other, gazing steadily at the General.

The father made a superhuman effort for self-control. "If she is happy with you," he said, "she is not worth regretting."

Hélène knelt timidly before her father.

"Father, I love and revere you," she said, "whether you lavish all the treasures of your kindness upon me, or make me feel to the full the rigor of disgrace. . . . But I entreat that your last words of farewell shall not be words of anger."

The General could not trust himself to look at her. The stranger came nearer; there was something half-diabolical, half-divine in the smile that he gave Hélène.

"Angel of pity, you that do not shrink in horror from a murderer, come, since you persist in your resolution of intrusting your life to me."

"Inconceivable!" cried her father.

The Marquise then looked strangely at her daughter, opened her arms, and Hélène fled to her in tears.

"Farewell," she said, "farewell, mother!" The stranger trembled as Hélène, undaunted, made sign to him that she was ready. She kissed her father's hand; and, as if performing a duty, gave a hasty kiss to Moïna and little Abel, then she vanished with the murderer.

"Which way are they going?" exclaimed the General, listening to the footsteps of the two fugitives.—"Madame," he turned to his wife, "I think I must be dreaming; there is some mystery behind all this, I do not understand it; you must know what it means."

The Marquise shivered.

"For some time past your daughter has grown extraordinarily romantic and strangely high-flown in her ideas. In spite of the pains I have taken to combat these tendencies in her character——"

"This will not do——" began the General, but fancying that he heard footsteps in the garden, he broke off to fling open the window.

"Hélène!" he shouted.

His voice was lost in the darkness like a vain prophecy. The utterance of that name, to which there should never be answer any more, acted like a counterspell; it broke the charm and set him free from the evil enchantment which lay upon him. It was as if some spirit passed over his face. He now saw clearly what had taken place, and cursed his incomprehensible weakness. A shiver of heat rushed from his heart to his head and feet; he became himself once more, terrible, thirsting for revenge. He raised a dreadful cry.

"Help!" he thundered, "help!"

He rushed to the bell-pull, pulled till the bells rang with a strange clamor of din, pulled till the cord gave way. The whole house was roused with a start. Still shouting, he flung open the windows that looked upon the street, called for the police, caught up his pistols, and fired them off to hurry the

mounted patrols, the newly-aroused servants, and the neighbors. The dogs barked at the sound of their master's voice; the horses neighed and stamped in their stalls. The quiet night was suddenly filled with hideous uproar. The General on the staircase, in pursuit of his daughter, saw the scared faces of the servants flocking from all parts of the house.

"My daughter!" he shouted. "Hélène has been carried off. Search the garden. Keep a lookout on the road! Open the gates for the gendarmerie!—Murder! Help!"

With the strength of fury he snapped the chain and let loose the great house-dog.

"Hélène!" he cried, "Hélène!"

The dog sprang out like a lion, barking furiously, and dashed into the garden, leaving the General far behind. A troop of horses came along the road at a gallop, and he flew to open the gates himself.

"Corporal!" he shouted, "cut off the retreat of M. de Mauny's murderer. They have gone through my garden. Quick! Put a cordon of men to watch the ways by the Butte de Picardie.—I will beat up the grounds, parks, and houses. —The rest of you keep a lookout along the road," he ordered the servants, "form a chain between the barrier and Versailles. Forward, every man of you!"

He caught up the rifle which his man had brought out, and dashed into the garden.

"Find them!" he called to the dog.

An ominous baying came in answer from the distance, and he plunged in the direction from which the growl seemed to come.

It was seven o'clock in the morning; all the search made by gendarmes, servants, and neighbors had been fruitless, and the dog had not come back. The General entered the salon, empty now for him though the other three children were there; he was worn out with fatigue, and looked old already with that night's work.

"You have been very cold to your daughter," he said, turning his eyes on his wife.—"And now this is all that is left

to us of her," he added, indicating the embroidery frame, and the flower just begun. "Only just now she was there, and now she is lost . . . lost!"

Tears followed; he hid his face in his hands, and for a few minutes he said no more; he could not bear the sight of the room, which so short a time ago had made a setting to a picture of the sweetest family happiness. The winter dawn was struggling with the dying lamplight; the tapers burned down to their paper-wreaths and flared out; everything was all in keeping with the father's despair.

"This must be destroyed," he said after a pause, pointing to the tambour-frame. "I shall never bear to see anything again that reminds us of *her!*"

The terrible Christmas night when the Marquis and his wife lost their oldest daughter, powerless to oppose the mysterious influence exercised by the man who involuntarily, as it were, stole Hélène from them, was like a warning sent by Fate. The Marquis was ruined by the failure of his stockbroker; he borrowed money on his wife's property, and lost it in the endeavor to retrieve his fortunes. Driven to desperate expedients, he left France. Six years went by. His family seldom had news of him; but a few days before Spain recognized the independence of the American Republics, he wrote that he was coming home.

So, one fine morning, it happened that several French merchants were on board a Spanish brig that lay a few leagues out from Bordeaux, impatient to reach their native land again, with wealth acquired by long years of toil and perilous adventures in Venezuela and Mexico.

One of the passengers, a man who looked aged by trouble rather than by years, was leaning against the bulwark netting, apparently quite unaffected by the sight to be seen from the upper deck. The bright day, the sense that the voyage was safely over, had brought all the passengers above to greet their land. The larger number of them insisted that they could see, far off in the distance, the houses and lighthouses on the coast of Gascony and the Tower of Cordouan, melting into the

fantastic erections of white cloud along the horizon. But for the silver fringe that played about their bows, and the long furrow swiftly effaced in their wake, they might have been perfectly still in mid-ocean, so calm was the sea. The sky was magically clear, the dark blue of the vault above paled by imperceptible gradations, until it blended with the bluish water, a gleaming line that sparkled like stars marking the dividing line of sea. The sunlight caught myriads of facets over the wide surface of the ocean, in such a sort that the vast plains of salt water looked perhaps more full of light than the fields of sky.

The brig had set all her canvas. The snowy sails, swelled by the strangely soft wind, the labyrinth of cordage, and the yellow flags flying at the masthead, all stood out sharp and uncompromisingly clear against the vivid background of space, sky, and sea; there was nothing to alter the color but the shadow cast by the great cloudlike sails.

A glorious day, a fair wind, and the fatherland in sight, a sea like a mill-pond, the melancholy sound of the ripples, a fair, solitary vessel, gliding across the surface of the water like a woman stealing out to a tryst—it was a picture full of harmony. That mere speck full of movement was a starting-point whence the soul of man could descry the immutable vast of space. Solitude and bustling life, silence and sound, were all brought together in strange abrupt contrast; you could not tell where life, or sound, or silence, and nothingness lay, and no human voice broke the divine spell.

The Spanish captain, the crew, and the French passengers sat or stood, in a mood of devout ecstasy, in which many memories blended. There was idleness in the air. The beaming faces told of complete forgetfulness of past hardships, the men were rocked on the fair vessel as in a golden dream. Yet, from time to time the elderly passenger, leaning over the bulwark nettings, looked with something like uneasiness at the horizon. Distrust of the ways of Fate could be read in his whole face; he seemed to fear that he should not reach the coast of France in time. This was the Marquis. For-

tune had not been deaf to his despairing cry and struggles. After five years of endeavor and painful toil, he was a wealthy man once more. In his impatience to reach his home again and to bring the good news to his family, he had followed the example set by some French merchants in Havana, and embarked with them on a Spanish vessel with a cargo for Bordeaux. And now, grown tired of evil forebodings, his fancy was tracing out for him the most delicious pictures of past happiness. In that far-off brown line of land he seemed to see his wife and children. He sat in his place by the fireside; they were crowding about him; he felt their caresses. Moïna had grown to be a young girl; she was beautiful, and tall, and striking. The fancied picture had grown almost real, when the tears filled his eyes, and, to hide his emotion, he turned his face towards the sea-line, opposite the hazy streak that meant land.

"There she is again. . . . She is following us!" he said.

"What?" cried the Spanish captain.

"There is a vessel," muttered the General.

"I saw her yesterday," answered Captain Gomez. He looked at his interlocutor as if to ask what he thought; then he added, in the General's ear, "She has been chasing us all along."

"Then why she has not come up with us, I do not know," said the General, "for she is a faster sailer than your damned *Saint-Ferdinand.*"

"She will have damaged herself, sprung a leak——"

"She is gaining on us!" the General broke in.

"She is a Colombian privateer," the captain said in his ear, "and we are still six leagues from land, and the wind is dropping."

"She is not *going* ahead, she is flying, as if she knew that in two hours' time her prey would escape her. What audacity!"

"Audacity!" cried the captain. "Oh! she is not called the *Othello* for nothing. Not so long back she sank a Spanish

frigate that carried thirty guns! This is the one thing I was afraid of, for I had a notion that she was cruising about somewhere off the Antilles.—Aha!" he added after a pause, as he watched the sails of his own vessel, "the wind is rising; we are making way. Get through we must, for 'the Parisian' will show us no mercy."

"She is making way too!" returned the General.

The *Othello* was scarce three leagues away by this time; and although the conversation between the Marquis and Captain Gomez had taken place apart, passengers and crew, attracted by the sudden appearance of a sail, came to that side of the vessel. With scarcely an exception, however, they took the privateer for a merchantman, and watched her course with interest, till all at once a sailor shouted with some energy of language:

"By Saint-James, it is all up with us! Yonder is the Parisian captain!"

At that terrible name dismay, and a panic impossible to describe, spread through the brig. The Spanish captain's orders put energy into the crew for a while; and in his resolute determination to make land at all costs, he set all the studding sails, and crowded on every stitch of canvas on board. But all this was not the work of a moment; and naturally the men did not work together with that wonderful unanimity so fascinating to watch on board a man-of-war. The *Othello* meanwhile, thanks to the trimming of her sails, flew over the water like a swallow; but she was making, to all appearance, so little headway, that the unlucky Frenchmen began to entertain sweet delusive hopes. At last, after unheard-of efforts, the *Saint-Ferdinand* sprang forward, Gomez himself directing the shifting of the sheets with voice and gesture, when all at once the man at the tiller, steering at random (purposely, no doubt), swung the vessel round. The wind striking athwart the beam, the sails shivered so unexpectedly that the brig heeled to one side, the booms were carried away, and the vessel was completely out of hand. The captain's face grew whiter than his sails with unutterable rage. He

sprang upon the man at the tiller, drove his dagger at him in such blind fury, that he missed him, and hurled the weapon overboard. Gomez took the helm himself, and strove to right the gallant vessel. Tears of despair rose to his eyes, for it is harder to lose the result of our carefully-laid plans through treachery than to face imminent death. But the more the captain swore, the less the men worked, and it was he himself who fired the alarm-gun, hoping to be heard on shore. The privateer, now gaining hopelessly upon them, replied with a cannon-shot, which struck the water ten fathoms away from the *Saint-Ferdinand.*

"Thunder of heaven!" cried the General, "that was a close shave! They must have guns made on purpose."

"Oh! when that one yonder speaks, look you, you have to hold your tongue," said a sailor. "The Parisian would not be afraid to meet an English man-of-war."

"It is all over with us," the captain cried in desperation; he had pointed his telescope landwards, and saw not a sign from the shore. "We are further from the coast than I thought."

"Why do you despair?" asked the General. "All your passengers are Frenchmen; they have chartered your vessel. The privateer is a Parisian, you say? Well and good, run up the white flag, and——"

"And he would run us down," retorted the captain. "He can be anything he likes when he has a mind to seize on a rich booty!"

"Oh! if he is a pirate——"

"Pirate!" said the ferocious looking sailor. "Oh! he always has the law on his side, or he knows how to be on the same side as the law."

"Very well," said the General, raising his eyes, "let us make up our minds to it," and his remaining fortitude was still sufficient to keep back the tears.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a second cannon-shot, better aimed, came crashing through the hull of the *Saint-Ferdinand.*

"Heave to!" cried the captain gloomily.

The sailor who had commended the Parisian's law-abiding proclivities showed himself a clever hand at working a ship after this desperate order was given. The crew waited for half an hour in an agony of suspense and the deepest dismay. The *Saint-Ferdinand* had four millions of piastres on board, the whole fortunes of the five passengers, and the General's eleven hundred thousand francs. At length the *Othello* lay not ten gunshots away, so that those on the *Saint-Ferdinand* could look into the muzzles of her loaded guns. The vessel seemed to be borne along by a breeze sent by the Devil himself, but the eyes of an expert would have discovered the secret of her speed at once. You had but to look for a moment at the rake of her stern, her long, narrow keel, her tall masts, to see the cut of her sails, the wonderful lightness of her rigging, and the ease and perfect seamanship with which her crew trimmed her sails to the wind. Everything about her gave the impression of the security of power in this delicately curved inanimate creature, swift and intelligent as a greyhound or some bird of prey. The privateer crew stood silent, ready in case of resistance to shatter the wretched merchantman, which, luckily for her, remained motionless, like a schoolboy caught in flagrant delict by a master.

"We have guns on board!" cried the General, clutching the Spanish captain's hand. But the courage in Gomez's eyes was the courage of despair.

"Have we men?" he said.

The Marquis looked round at the crew of the *Saint-Ferdinand,* and a cold chill ran through him. There stood the four merchants, pale and quaking for fear, while the crew gathered about some of their own number who appeared to be arranging to go over in a body to the enemy. They watched the *Othello* with greed and curiosity in their faces. The captain, the Marquis, and the mate exchanged glances; they were the only three who had a thought for any but themselves.

"Ah! Captain Gomez, when I left my home and country,

my heart was half dead with the bitterness of parting, and now must I bid it good-bye once more when I am bringing back happiness and ease for my children?"

The General turned his head away towards the sea, with tears of rage in his eyes—and saw the steersman swimming out to the privateer.

"This time it will be good-bye for good," said the captain by way of answer, and the dazed look in the Frenchman's eyes startled the Spaniard.

By this time the two vessels were almost alongside, and at the first sight of the enemy's crew the General saw that Gomez's gloomy prophecy was only too true. The three men at each gun might have been bronze statues, standing like athletes, with their rugged features, their bare sinewy arms, men whom Death himself had scarcely thrown off their feet.

The rest of the crew, well armed, active, light, and vigorous, also stood motionless. Toil had hardened, and the sun had deeply tanned, those energetic faces; their eyes glittered like sparks of fire with infernal glee and clear-sighted courage. Perfect silence on the upper deck, now black with men, bore abundant testimony to the rigorous discipline and strong will which held these fiends incarnate in check.

The captain of the *Othello* stood with folded arms at the foot of the main mast; he carried no weapons, but an axe lay on the deck beside him. His face was hidden by the shadow of a broad felt hat. The men looked like dogs crouching before their master. Gunners, soldiers, and ship's crew turned their eyes first on his face, and then on the merchant vessel.

The two brigs came up alongside, and the shock of contact roused the privateer captain from his musings; he spoke a word in the ear of the lieutenant who stood beside him.

"Grappling-irons!" shouted the latter, and the *Othello* grappled the *Saint-Ferdinand* with miraculous quickness. The captain of the privateer gave his orders in a low voice to the lieutenant, who repeated them; the men, told off in succession for each duty, went on the upper deck of the *Saint-Ferdi-*

nand, like seminarists going to mass. They bound crew and passengers hand and foot and seized the booty. In the twinkling of an eye, provisions and barrels full of piastres were transferred to the *Othello;* the General thought that he must be dreaming when he himself, likewise bound, was flung down on a bale of goods as if he had been part of the cargo.

A brief conference took place between the captain of the privateer and his lieutenant and a sailor, who seemed to be the mate of the vessel; then the mate gave a whistle, and the men jumped on board the *Saint-Ferdinand,* and completely dismantled her with the nimble dexterity of a soldier who strips a dead comrade of a coveted overcoat and shoes.

"It is all over with us," said the Spanish captain coolly. He had eyed the three chiefs during their confabulation, and saw that the sailors were proceeding to pull his vessel to pieces.

"Why so?" asked the General.

"What would you have them do with us?" returned the Spaniard. "They have just come to the conclusion that they will scarcely sell the *Saint-Ferdinand* in any French or Spanish port, so they are going to sink her to be rid of her. And as for us, do you suppose that they will put themselves to the expense of feeding us, when they don't know what port they are to put into?"

The words were scarcely out of the captain's mouth before a hideous outcry went up, followed by a dull splashing sound, as several bodies were thrown overboard. He turned, the four merchants were no longer to be seen, but eight ferocious-looking gunners were still standing with their arms raised above their heads. He shuddered.

"What did I tell you?" the Spanish captain asked coolly.

The Marquis rose to his feet with a spring. The surface of the sea was quite smooth again; he could not so much as see the place where his unhappy fellow-passengers had disappeared. By this time they were sinking down, bound hand and foot, below the waves, if, indeed, the fish had not devoured them already.

Only a few paces away, the treacherous steersman and the sailor who had boasted of the Parisian's power were fraternizing with the crew of the *Othello,* and pointing out those among their own number who, in their opinion, were worthy to join the crew of the privateer. Then the boys tied the rest together by the feet in spite of frightful oaths. It was soon over; the eight gunners seized the doomed men and flung them overboard without more ado, watching the different ways in which the drowning victims met their death, their contortions, their last agony, with a sort of malignant curiosity, but with no sign of amusement, surprise, or pity. For them it was an ordinary event to which seemingly they were quite accustomed. The older men looked instead with grim, set smiles at the casks of piastres about the main mast.

The General and Captain Gomez, left seated on a bale of goods, consulted each other with well-nigh hopeless looks; they were, in a sense, the sole survivors of the *Saint-Ferdinand,* for the seven men pointed out by the spies were transformed amid rejoicings into Peruvians.

"What atrocious villains!" the General cried. Loyal and generous indignation silenced prudence and pain on his own account.

"They do it because they must," Gomez answered coolly. "If you came across one of those fellows, you would run him through the body, would you not?"

The lieutenant now came up to the Spaniard.

"Captain," said he, "the Parisian has heard of you. He says that you are the only man who really knows the passages of the Antilles and the Brazilian coast. Will you——?"

The captain cut him short with a scornful exclamation.

"I shall die like a sailor," he said, "and a loyal Spaniard and a Christian. Do you hear?"

"Heave him overboard!" shouted the lieutenant, and a couple of gunners seized on Gomez.

"You cowards!" roared the General, seizing hold of the men.

"Don't get too excited, old boy," said the lieutenant. "If

your red ribbon has made some impression upon our captain, I myself do not care a rap for it.—You and I will have our little bit of talk together directly."

A smothered sound, with no accompanying cry, told the General that the gallant captain had died "like a sailor," as he had said.

"My money or death!" cried the Marquis, in a fit of rage terrible to see.

"Ah! now you talk sensibly!" sneered the lieutenant. "That is the way to get something out of us——"

Two of the men came up at a sign and hastened to bind the Frenchman's feet, but with unlooked-for boldness he snatched the lieutenant's cutlass and laid about him like a cavalry officer who knows his business.

"Brigands that you are! You shall not chuck one of Napoleon's troopers over a ship's side like an oyster!"

At the sound of pistol shots fired point blank at the Frenchman, "the Parisian" looked round from his occupation of superintending the transfer of the rigging from the *Saint-Ferdinand.* He came up behind the brave General, seized him, dragged him to the side, and was about to fling him over with no more concern than if the man had been a broken spar. They were at the very edge when the General looked into the tawny eyes of the man who had stolen his daughter. The recognition was mutual.

The captain of the privateer, his arm still upraised, suddenly swung it in the contrary direction as if his victim was but a feather weight, and set him down at the foot of the main mast. A murmur rose on the upper deck, but the captain glanced round, and there was a sudden silence.

"This is Hélène's father," said the captain in a clear, firm voice. "Woe to any one who meddles with him!"

A hurrah of joy went up at the words, a shout rising to the sky like a prayer of the church; a cry like the first high notes of the *Te Deum.* The lads swung aloft in the rigging, the men below flung up their caps, the gunners pounded away on the deck, there was a general thrill of excitement, an outburst

of oaths, yells, and shrill cries in voluble chorus. The men cheered like fanatics, the General's misgivings deepened, and he grew uneasy; it seemed to him that there was some horrible mystery in such wild transports.

"My daughter!" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "Where is my daughter?"

For all answer, the captain of the privateer gave him a searching glance, one of those glances which throw the bravest man into a confusion which no theory can explain. The General was mute, not a little to the satisfaction of the crew; it pleased them to see their leader exercise the strange power which he possessed over all with whom he came in contact. Then the captain led the way down a staircase and flung open the door of a cabin.

"There she is," he said, and disappeared, leaving the General in a stupor of bewilderment at the scene before his eyes.

Hélène cried out at the sight of him, and sprang up from the sofa on which she was lying when the door flew open. So changed was she that none but a father's eyes could have recognized her. The sun of the tropics had brought warmer tones into the once pale face, and something of Oriental charm with that wonderful coloring; there was a certain grandeur about her, a majestic firmness, a profound sentiment which impresses itself upon the coarsest nature. Her long, thick hair, falling in large curls about her queenly throat, gave an added idea of power to the proud face. The consciousness of that power shone out from every movement, every line of Hélène's form. The rose-tinted nostrils were dilated slightly with the joy of triumph; the serene happiness of her life had left its plain tokens in the full development of her beauty. A certain indefinable virginal grace met in her with the pride of a woman who is loved. This was a slave and a queen, a queen who would fain obey that she might reign.

Her dress was magnificent and elegant in its richness; India muslin was the sole material, but her sofa and cushions were of cashmere. A Persian carpet covered the floor in the

large cabin, and her four children playing at her feet were building castles of gems and pearl necklaces and jewels of price. The air was full of the scent of rare flowers in Sèvres porcelain vases painted by Madame Jacotot; tiny South American birds, like living rubies, sapphires, and gold, hovered among the Mexican jessamines and camellias. A pianoforte had been fitted into the room, and here and there on the paneled walls, covered with red silk, hung small pictures by great painters—a *Sunset by* Hippolyte Schinner beside a Terburg, one of Raphael's Madonnas scarcely yielded in charm to a sketch by Géricault, while a Gérard Dow eclipsed the painters of the Empire. On a lacquered table stood a golden plate full of delicious fruit. Indeed, Hélène might have been the sovereign lady of some great country, and this cabin of hers a boudoir in which her crowned lover had brought together all earth's treasure to please his consort. The children gazed with bright, keen eyes at their grandfather. Accustomed as they were to a life of battle, storm, and tumult, they recalled the Roman children in David's *Brutus,* watching the fighting and bloodshed with curious interest.

"What! is it possible?" cried Hélène, catching her father's arm as if to assure herself that this was no vision.

"Hélène!"

"Father!"

They fell into each other's arms, and the old man's embrace was not so close and warm as Hélène's.

"Were you on board that vessel?"

"Yes," he answered sadly, and looking at the little ones, who gathered about him and gazed with wide open eyes.

"I was about to perish, but——"

"But for my husband," she broke in. "I see how it was."

"Ah!" cried the General, "why must I find you again like this, Hélène? After all the many tears that I have shed, must I still groan for your fate?"

"And why?" she asked, smiling. "Why should you be sorry to learn that I am the happiest woman under the sun?"

"Happy?" he cried with a start of surprise.

"Yes, happy, my kind father," and she caught his hands in hers and covered them with kisses, and pressed them to her throbbing heart. Her caresses, and a something in the carriage of her head, were interpreted yet more plainly by the joy sparkling in her eyes.

"And how is this?" he asked, wondering at his daughter's life, forgetful now of everything but the bright glowing face before him.

"Listen, father; I have for lover, husband, servant, and master one whose soul is as great as the boundless sea, as infinite in his kindness as heaven, a god on earth! Never during these seven years has a chance look, or word, or gesture jarred in the divine harmony of his talk, his love, his caresses. His eyes have never met mine without a gleam of happiness in them; there has always been a bright smile on his lips for me. On deck, his voice rises above the thunder of storms and the tumult of battle; but here below it is soft and melodious as Rossini's music—for he has Rossini's music sent for me. I have everything that woman's caprice can imagine. My wishes are more than fulfilled. In short, I am a queen on the seas; I am obeyed here as perhaps a queen may be obeyed. —Ah!" she cried, interrupting herself, "*happy* did I say? Happiness is no word to express such bliss as mine. All the happiness that should have fallen to all the women in the world has been my share. Knowing one's own great love and self-devotion, to find in *his* heart an infinite love in which a woman's soul is lost, and lost for ever—tell me, is this happiness? I have lived through a thousand lives even now. Here, I am alone; here, I command. No other woman has set foot on this noble vessel, and Victor is never more than a few paces distant from me,—he cannot wander further from me than from stern to prow," she added, with a shade of mischief in her manner. "Seven years! A love that outlasts seven years of continual joy, that endures all the tests brought by all the moments that make up seven years—is this love? Oh, no, no! it is something better than all that I know of life . . . human language fails to express the bliss of heaven."

A sudden torrent of tears fell from her burning eyes. The four little ones raised a piteous cry at this, and flocked like chickens about their mother. The oldest boy struck the General with a threatening look.

"Abel, darling," said Hélène, "I am crying for joy."

Hélène took him on her knee, and the child fondled her, putting his arms about her queenly neck, as a lion's whelp might play with the lioness.

"Do you never weary of your life?" asked the General, bewildered by his daughter's enthusiastic language.

"Yes," she said, "sometimes, when we are on land, yet even then I have never parted from my husband."

"But you used to be fond of music and balls and fêtes."

"His voice is music for me; and for fêtes, I devise new toilettes for him to see. When he likes my dress, it is as if all the world admired me. Simply for that reason I keep the diamonds and jewels, the precious things, the flowers and masterpieces of art that he heaps upon me, saying, 'Hélène, as you live out of the world, I will have the world come to you.' But for that I would fling them all overboard."

"But there are others on board, wild, reckless men whose passions——"

"I understand, father," she said, smiling. "Do not fear for me. Never was empress encompassed with more observance than I. The men are very superstitious; they look upon me as a sort of tutelary genius, the luck of the vessel. But *he* is their god; they worship him. Once, and once only, one of the crew showed disrespect, mere words," she added, laughing; "but before Victor knew of it, the others flung the offender overboard, although I forgave him. They love me as their good angel; I nurse them when they are ill; several times I have been so fortunate as to save a life, by constant care such as a woman can give. Poor fellows, they are giants, but they are children at the same time."

"And when there is fighting overhead?"

"I am used to it now; I quaked for fear during the first engagement, but never since.—I am used to such peril, and—I am your daughter," she said; "I love it."

"But how if he should fall?"

"I should die with him."

"And your children."

"They are children of the sea and of danger; they share the life of their parents. We have but one life, and we do not flinch from it. We have but the one life, our names are written on the same page of the book of Fate, one skiff bears us and our fortunes, and we know it."

"Do you so love him that he is more to you than all beside?"

"All beside?" echoed she. "Let us leave that mystery alone. Yet stay! there is this dear little one—well, this too is *he*," and straining Abel to her in a tight clasp, she set eager kisses on his cheeks and hair.

"But I can never forget that he has just drowned nine men!" exclaimed the General.

"There was no help for it, doubtless," she said, "for he is generous and humane. He sheds as little blood as may be, and only in the interests of the little world which he defends, and the sacred cause for which he is fighting. Talk to him about anything that seems to you to be wrong, and he will convince you, you will see."

"There was that crime of his," muttered the General to himself.

"But how if that crime was a virtue?" she asked, with cold dignity. "How if man's justice had failed to avenge a great wrong?"

"But a private revenge!" exclaimed her father.

"But what is hell," she cried, "but a revenge through all eternity for the wrong done in a little day?"

"Ah! you are lost! He has bewitched and perverted you. You are talking wildly."

"Stay with us one day, father, and if you will but listen to him, and see him, you will love him."

"Hélène, France lies only a few leagues away," he said gravely.

Hélène trembled; then she went to the porthole and

pointed to the savannas of green water spreading far and wide.

"There lies my country," she said, tapping the carpet with her foot.

"But are you not coming with me to see your mother and your sister and brothers?"

"Oh! yes," she cried, with tears in her voice, "if *he* is willing, if he will come with me."

"So," the General said sternly, "you have neither country nor kin now, Hélène?"

"I am his wife," she answered proudly, and there was something very noble in her tone. "This is the first happiness in seven years that has not come to me through him," she said—then, as she caught her father's hand and kissed it—"and this is the first word of reproach that I have heard."

"And your conscience?"

"My conscience; he is my conscience!" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "Here he is! Even in the thick of a fight I can tell his footstep among all the others on deck," she cried.

A sudden crimson flushed her cheeks and glowed in her features, her eyes lighted up, her complexion changed to velvet whiteness, there was joy and love in every fibre, in the blue veins, in the unconscious trembling of her whole frame. That quiver of the sensitive plant softened the General.

It was as she had said. The captain came in, sat down in an easy-chair, took up his oldest boy, and began to play with him. There was a moment's silence, for the General's deep musing had grown vague and dreamy, and the daintily furnished cabin and the playing children seemed like a nest of halcyons, floating on the waves, between sky and sea, safe in the protection of this man who steered his way amid the perils of war and tempest, as other heads of households guide those in their care among the hazards of common life. He gazed admiringly at Hélène—a dreamlike vision of some sea goddess, gracious in her loveliness, rich in happiness; all the treasures about her grown poor in comparison with the wealth

of her nature, paling before the brightness of her eyes, the indefinable romance expressed in her and her surroundings.

The strangeness of the situation took the General by surprise; the ideas of ordinary life were thrown into confusion by this lofty passion and reasoning. Chill and narrow social conventions faded away before this picture. All these things the old soldier felt, and saw no less how impossible it was that his daughter should give up so wide a life, a life so variously rich, filled to the full with such passionate love. And Hélène had tasted danger without shrinking; how could she return to the petty stage, the superficial circumscribed life of society?

It was the captain who broke the silence at last.

"Am I in the way?" he asked, looking at his wife.

"No," said the General, answering for her. "Hélène has told me all. I see that she is lost to us——"

"No," the captain put in quickly; "in a few years' time the statute of limitations will allow me to go back to France. When the conscience is clear, and a man has broken the law in obedience to——" he stopped short, as if scorning to justify himself.

"How can you commit new murders, such as I have seen with my own eyes, without remorse?"

"We had no provisions," the privateer captain retorted calmly.

"But if you had set the men ashore——"

"They would have given the alarm and sent a man-of-war after us, and we should never have seen Chili again."

"Before France would have given warning to the Spanish admiralty——" began the General.

"But France might take it amiss that a man, with a warrant still out against him, should seize a brig chartered by Bordeaux merchants. And for that matter, have you never fired a shot or so too many in battle?"

The General shrank under the other's eyes. He said no more, and his daughter looked at him half sadly, half triumphant.

"General," the privateer continued, in a deep voice, "I have made it a rule to abstract nothing from booty. But even so, my share will beyond a doubt be far larger than your fortune. Permit me to return it to you in another form——"

He drew a pile of banknotes from the piano, and without counting the packets handed a million of francs to the Marquis.

"You can understand," he said, "that I cannot spend my time in watching vessels pass by to Bordeaux. So unless the dangers of this Bohemian life of ours have some attraction for you, unless you care to see South America and the nights of the tropics, and a bit of fighting now and again for the pleasure of helping to win a triumph for a young nation, or for the name of Simon Bolivar, we must part. The long boat manned with a trustworthy crew is ready for you. And now let us hope that our third meeting will be completely happy."

"Victor," said Hélène in a dissatisfied tone, "I should like to see a little more of my father."

"Ten minutes more or less may bring up a French frigate. However, so be it, we shall have a little fun. The men find things dull."

"Oh, father, go!" cried Hélène, "and take these keepsakes from me to my sister and brothers and—mother," she added. She caught up a handful of jewels and precious stones, folded them in an Indian shawl, and timidly held it out.

"But what shall I say to them from you?" asked he. Her hesitation on the word "mother" seemed to have struck him.

"Oh! can you doubt me? I pray for their happiness every day."

"Hélène," he began, as he watched her closely, "how if we should not meet again? Shall I never know why you left us?"

"That secret is not mine," she answered gravely. "Even if I had the right to tell it, perhaps I should not. For ten years I was more miserable than words can say——"

She broke off, and gave her father the presents for her family. The General had acquired tolerably easy views as to

booty in the course of a soldier's career, so he took Hélène's gifts and comforted himself with the reflection that the Parisian captain was sure to wage war against the Spaniards as an honorable man, under the influence of Hélène's pure and high-minded nature. His passion for courage carried all before it. It was ridiculous, he thought, to be squeamish in the matter; so he shook hands cordially with his captor, and kissed Hélène, his only daughter, with a soldier's expansiveness; letting fall a tear on the face with the proud, strong look that once he had loved to see. "The Parisian," deeply moved, brought the children for his blessing. The parting was over, the last good-bye was a long farewell look, with something of tender regret on either side.

A strange sight to seaward met the General's eyes. The *Saint-Ferdinand* was blazing like a huge bonfire. The men told off to sink the Spanish brig had found a cargo of rum on board; and as the *Othello* was already amply supplied, had lighted a floating bowl of punch on the high seas, by way of a joke; a pleasantry pardonable enough in sailors, who hail any chance excitement as a relief from the apparent monotony of life at sea. As the General went over the side into the longboat of the *Saint-Ferdinand*, manned by six vigorous rowers, he could not help looking at the burning vessel, as well as at the daughter who stood by her husband's side on the stern of the *Othello*. He saw Hélène's white dress flutter like one more sail in the breeze; he saw the tall, noble figure against a background of sea, queenly still even in the presence of Ocean; and so many memories crowded up in his mind, that, with a soldier's recklessness of life, he forgot that he was being borne over the grave of the brave Gomez.

A vast column of smoke rising spread like a brown cloud, pierced here and there by fantastic shafts of sunlight. It was a second sky, a murky dome reflecting the glow of the fire as if the under surface had been burnished; but above it soared the unchanging blue of the firmament, a thousand times fairer for the short-lived contrast. The strange hues of the smoke cloud, black and red, tawny and pale by turns,

blurred and blending into each other, shrouded the burning vessel as it flared, crackled and groaned; the hissing tongues of flame licked up the rigging, and flashed across the hull, like a rumor of riot flashing along the streets of a city. The burning rum sent up blue flitting lights. Some sea god might have been stirring the furious liquor as a student stirs the joyous flames of punch in an orgy. But in the overpowering sunlight, jealous of the insolent blaze, the colors were scarcely visible, and the smoke was but a film fluttering like a thin scarf in the noonday torrent of light and heat.

The *Othello* made the most of the little wind she could gain to fly on her new course. Swaying first to one side, then to the other, like a stag beetle on the wing, the fair vessel beat to windward on her zigzag flight to the south. Sometimes she was hidden from sight by the straight column of smoke that flung fantastic shadows across the water, then gracefully she shot out clear of it, and Hélène, catching sight of her father, waved her handkerchief for yet one more farewell greeting.

A few more minutes, and the *Saint-Ferdinand* went down with a bubbling turmoil, at once effaced by the ocean. Nothing of all that had been was left but a smoke cloud hanging in the breeze. The *Othello* was far away, the long-boat had almost reached land, the cloud came between the frail skiff and the brig, and it was through a break in the swaying smoke that the General caught the last glimpse of Hélène. A prophetic vision! Her dress and her white handkerchief stood out against the murky background. Then the brig was not even visible between the green water and the blue sky, and Hélène was nothing but an imperceptible speck, a faint graceful line, an angel in heaven, a mental image, a memory.

The Marquis had retrieved his fortunes, when he died, worn out with toil. A few months after his death, in 1833, the Marquise was obliged to take Moïna to a watering-place in the Pyrenees, for the capricious child had a wish to see the beautiful mountain scenery. They left the baths, and the following tragical incident occurred on their way home.

"Dear me, mother," said Moïna, "it was very foolish of us not to stay among the mountains a few days longer. It was much nicer there. Did you hear that horrid child moaning all night, and that wretched woman, gabbling away in patois no doubt, for I could not understand a single word she said. What kind of people can they have put in the next room to ours? This is one of the horridest nights I have ever spent in my life."

"I heard nothing," said the Marquise, "but I will see the landlady, darling, and engage the next room, and then we shall have the whole suite of rooms to ourselves, and there will be no more noise. How do you feel this morning? Are you tired?"

As she spoke, the Marquise rose and went to Moïna's bedside.

"Let us see," she said, feeling for the girl's hand.

"Oh! let me alone, mother," said Moïna; "your fingers are cold."

She turned her head round on the pillow as she spoke, pettishly, but with such engaging grace, that a mother could scarcely have taken it amiss. Just then a wailing cry echoed through the next room, a faint prolonged cry, that must surely have gone to the heart of any woman who heard it.

"Why, if you heard *that* all night long, why did you not wake me? We should have——"

A deeper moan than any that had gone before it interrupted the Marquise.

"Some one is dying there," she cried, and hurried out of the room.

"Send Pauline to me!" called Moïna. "I shall get up and dress."

The Marquise hastened downstairs, and found the landlady in the courtyard with a little group about her, apparently much interested in something that she was telling them.

"Madame, you have put some one in the next room who seems to be very ill indeed——"

"Oh! don't talk to me about it!" cried the mistress of the

house. "I have just sent some one for the mayor. Just imagine it; it is a woman, a poor unfortunate creature that came here last night on foot. She comes from Spain; she has no passport and no money; she was carrying her baby on her back, and the child was dying. I could not refuse to take her in. I went up to see her this morning myself; for when she turned up yesterday, it made me feel dreadfully bad to look at her. Poor soul! she and the child were lying in bed, and both of them at death's door. 'Madame,' says she, pulling a gold ring off her finger, 'this is all that I have left; take it in payment, it will be enough; I shall not stay here long. Poor little one! we shall die together soon!' she said, looking at the child. I took her ring, and I asked her who she was, but she never would tell me her name. . . . I have just sent for the doctor and M. le Maire."

"Why, you must do all that can be done for her," cried the Marquise. "Good heavens! perhaps it is not too late! I will pay for everything that is necessary——"

"Ah! my lady, she looks to me to be uncommonly proud, and I don't know that she would allow it."

"I will go to see her at once."

The Marquise went up forthwith to the stranger's room, without thinking of the shock that the sight of her widow's weeds might give to a woman who was said to be dying. At the sight of that dying woman the Marquise turned pale. In spite of the changes wrought by fearful suffering in Hélène's beautiful face, she recognized her eldest daughter.

But Hélène, when she saw a woman dressed in black, sat upright in bed with a shriek of horror. Then she sank back; she knew her mother.

"My daughter," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, "what is to be done? Pauline! . . . Moïna! . . ."

"Nothing now for me," said Hélène, faintly. "I had hoped to see my father once more, but your mourning——" she broke off, clutched her child to her heart as if to give it warmth, and kissed its forehead. Then she turned her eyes on her mother, and the Marquise met the old reproach in them, tempered with forgiveness, it is true, but still re-

proach. She saw it, and would not see it. She forgot that Hélène was the child conceived amid tears and despair, the child of duty, the cause of one of the greatest sorrows in her life. She stole to her eldest daughter's side, remembering nothing but that Hélène was her firstborn, the child who had taught her to know the joys of motherhood. The mother's eyes were full of tears. "Hélène, my child! . . ." she cried, with her arms about her daughter.

Hélène was silent. Her own babe had just drawn its last breath on her breast.

Moïna came into the room with Pauline, her maid, and the landlady and the doctor. The Marquise was holding her daughter's ice-cold hand in both of hers, and gazing at her in despair; but the widowed woman, who had escaped shipwreck with but one of all her fair band of children, spoke in a voice that was dreadful to hear. "All this is your work," she said. "If you had but been for me all that——"

"Moïna, go! Go out of the room, all of you!" cried Mme. d'Aiglemont, her shrill tones drowning Hélène's voice.—"For pity's sake," she continued, "let us not begin these miserable quarrels again now——"

"I will be silent," Hélène answered with a preternatural effort. "I am a mother; I know that Moïna ought not . . . Where is my child?"

Moïna came back, impelled by curiosity.

"Sister," said the spoiled child, "the doctor——"

"It is all of no use," said Hélène. "Oh! why did I not die as a girl of sixteen when I meant to take my own life? There is no happiness outside the laws. Moïna . . . you . . ."

Her head sank till her face lay against the face of the little one; in her agony she strained her babe to her breast, and died.

"Your sister, Moïna," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, bursting into tears when she reached her room, "your sister meant no doubt to tell you that a girl will never find happiness in a romantic life, in living as nobody else does, and, above all things, far away from her mother."

VI.

THE OLD AGE OF A GUILTY MOTHER

It was one of the earliest June days of the year 1844. A lady of fifty or thereabouts, for she looked older than her actual age, was pacing up and down one of the sunny paths in the garden of a great mansion in the Rue Plumet in Paris. It was noon. The lady took two or three turns along the gently winding garden walk, careful never to lose sight of a certain row of windows, to which she seemed to give her whole attention; then she sat down on a bench, a piece of elegant semi-rusticity made of branches with the bark left on the wood. From the place where she sat she could look through the garden railings along the inner boulevards to the wonderful dome of the Invalides rising above the crests of a forest of elm-trees, and see the less striking view of her own grounds terminating in the gray stone front of one of the finest hotels in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Silence lay over the neighboring gardens, and the boulevards stretching away to the Invalides. Day scarcely begins at noon in that aristocratic quarter, and masters and servants are all alike asleep, or just awakening, unless some young lady takes it into her head to go for an early ride, or a gray-headed diplomatist rises betimes to redraft a protocol.

The elderly lady stirring abroad at that hour was the Marquise d'Aiglemont, the mother of Mme. de Saint-Héreen, to whom the great house belonged. The Marquise had made over the mansion and almost her whole fortune to her daughter, reserving only an annuity for herself.

The Comtesse Moïna de Saint-Héreen was Mme. d'Aiglemont's youngest child. The Marquise had made every sacrifice to marry her daughter to the eldest son of one of the greatest houses of France; and this was only what might have been expected, for the lady had lost her sons, first one and then the other. Gustave, Marquis d'Aiglemont, had died

of the cholera; Abel, the second, had fallen in Algeria. Gustave had left a widow and children, but the dowager's affection for her sons had been only moderately warm, and for the next generation it was decidedly tepid. She was always civil to her daughter-in-law, but her feeling towards the young Marquise was the distinctly conventional affection which good taste and good manners require us to feel for our relatives. The fortunes of her dead children having been settled, she could devote her savings and her own property to her darling Moïna.

Moïna, beautiful and fascinating from childhood, was Mme. d'Aiglemont's favorite; loved beyond all the others with an instinctive or involuntary love, a fatal drawing of the heart, which sometimes seems inexplicable, sometimes, and to a close observer, only too easy to explain. Her darling's pretty face, the sound of Moïna's voice, her ways, her manner, her looks and gestures, roused all the deepest emotions that can stir a mother's heart with trouble, rapture, or delight. The springs of the Marquise's life, of yesterday, to-morrow, and to-day, lay in that young heart. Moïna, with better fortune, had survived four older children. As a matter of fact, Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her eldest daughter, a charming girl, in a most unfortunate manner, said gossip, nobody knew exactly what became of her; and then she lost a little boy of five by a dreadful accident.

The child of her affections had, however, been spared to her, and doubtless the Marquise saw the will of Heaven in that fact; for of those who had died, she kept but very shadowy recollections in some far-off corner of her heart; her memories of her dead children were like the headstones on a battlefield, you can scarcely see them for the flowers that have sprung up about them since. Of course, if the world had chosen, it might have said some hard truths about the Marquise, might have taken her to task for shallowness and an overweening preference for one child at the expense of the rest; but the world of Paris is swept along by the full flood of new events, new ideas, and new fashions, and it was inevi-

table that Mme. d'Aiglemont should be in some sort allowed to drop out of sight. So nobody thought of blaming her for coldness or neglect which concerned no one, whereas her quick, apprehensive tenderness for Moïna was found highly interesting by not a few who respected it as a sort of superstition. Besides, the Marquise scarcely went into society at all; and the few families who knew her thought of her as a kindly, gentle, indulgent woman, wholly devoted to her family. What but a curiosity, keen indeed, would seek to pry beneath the surface with which the world is quite satisfied? And what would we not pardon to old people, if only they will efface themselves like shadows, and consent to be regarded as memories and nothing more!

Indeed, Mme. d'Aiglemont became a kind of example complacently held up by the younger generation to fathers of families, and frequently cited to mothers-in-law. She had made over her property to Moïna in her own lifetime; the young Countess' happiness was enough for her, she only lived in her daughter. If some cautious old person or morose uncle here and there condemned the course with—"Perhaps Mme. d'Aiglemont may be sorry some day that she gave up her fortune to her daughter; she may be sure of Moïna, but how can she be equally sure of her son-in-law?"—these prophets were cried down on all sides, and from all sides a chorus of praise went up for Moïna.

"It ought to be said, in justice to Mme. de Saint-Héreen, that her mother cannot feel the slightest difference," remarked a young married woman. "Mme. d'Aiglemont is admirably well housed. She has a carriage at her disposal, and can go everywhere just as she used to do——"

"Except to the Italiens," remarked a low voice. (This was an elderly parasite, one of those persons who show their independence—as they think—by riddling their friends with epigrams.) "Except to the Italiens. And if the dowager cares for anything on this earth but her daughter—it is music. Such a good performer she was in her time! But the Countess' box is always full of young butterflies, and the

Countess' mother would be in the way; the young lady is talked about already as a great flirt. So the poor mother never goes to the Italiens."

"Mme. de Saint-Héreen has delightful 'At Homes' for her mother," said a rosebud. "All Paris goes to her salon."

"And no one pays any attention to the Marquise," returned the parasite.

"The fact is that Mme. d'Aiglemont is never alone," remarked a coxcomb, siding with the young women.

"In the morning," the old observer continued in a discreet voice, "in the morning dear Moïna is asleep. At four o'clock dear Moïna drives in the Bois. In the evening dear Moïna goes to a ball or to the Bouffes.—Still, it is certainly true that Mme. d'Aiglemont has the privilege of seeing her dear daughter while she dresses, and again at dinner, if dear Moïna happens to dine with her mother. Not a week ago, sir," continued the elderly person, laying his hand on the arm of the shy tutor, a new arrival in the house, "not a week ago, I saw the poor mother, solitary and sad, by her own fireside.—'What is the matter?' I asked. The Marquise looked up smiling, but I am quite sure that she had been crying.—'I was thinking that it is a strange thing that I should be left alone when I have had five children,' she said, 'but that is our destiny! And besides, I am happy when I know that Moïna is enjoying herself.'—She could say that to me, for I knew her husband when he was alive. A poor stick he was, and uncommonly lucky to have such a wife; it was certainly owing to her that he was made a peer of France, and had a place at Court under Charles X."

Yet such mistaken ideas get about in social gossip, and such mischief is done by it, that the historian of manners is bound to exercise his discretion, and weigh the assertions so recklessly made. After all, who is to say that either mother or daughter was right or wrong? There is but One who can read and judge their hearts! And how often does He wreak His vengeance in the family circle, using throughout all time children as His instruments against their mothers, and fathers

against their sons, raising up peoples against kings, and princes against peoples, sowing strife and division everywhere? And in the world of ideas, are not old opinions and feelings expelled by new feelings and opinions, much as withered leaves are thrust forth by the young leaf-buds in the spring?—all in obedience to the immutable Scheme; all to some end which God alone knows. Yet, surely, all things proceed to Him, or rather, to Him all things return.

Such thoughts of religion, the natural thoughts of age, floated up now and again on the current of Mme. d'Aiglemont's thoughts; they were always dimly present in her mind, but sometimes they shone out clearly, sometimes they were carried under, like flowers tossed on the vexed surface of a stormy sea.

She sat on the garden-seat, tired with walking, exhausted with much thinking—with the long thoughts in which a whole lifetime rises up before the mind, and is spread out like a scroll before the eyes of those who feel that Death is near.

If a poet had chanced to pass along the boulevard, he would have found an interesting picture in the face of this woman, grown old before her time. As she sat under the dotted shadow of the acacia, the shadow the acacia casts at noon, a thousand thoughts were written for all the world to see on her features, pale and cold even in the hot, bright sunlight. There was something sadder than the sense of waning life in that expressive face, some trouble that went deeper than the weariness of experience. It was a face of a type that fixes you in a moment among a host of characterless faces that fail to draw a second glance, a face to set you thinking. Among a thousand pictures in a gallery, you are strongly impressed by the sublime anguish on the face of some Madonna of Murillo's; by some *Beatrice Cenci* in which Guido's art portrays the most touching innocence against a background of horror and crime; by the awe and majesty that should encircle a king, caught once and for ever by Velasquez in the sombre face of a Philip II., and so is it with some living human faces; they are tyrannous pictures which speak to you, sub-

mit you to searching scrutiny, and give response to your inmost thoughts, nay, there are faces that set forth a whole drama, and Mme. d'Aiglemont's stony face was one of these awful tragedies, one of such faces as Dante Alighieri saw by thousands in his vision.

For the little season that a woman's beauty is in flower it serves her admirably well in the dissimulation to which her natural weakness and our social laws condemn her. A young face and rich color, and eyes that glow with light, a gracious maze of such subtle, manifold lines and curves, flawless and perfectly traced, is a screen that hides everything that stirs the woman within. A flush tells nothing, it only heightens the coloring so brilliant already; all the fires that burn within can add little light to the flame of life in eyes which only seem the brighter for the flash of a passing pain. Nothing is so discreet as a young face, for nothing is less mobile; it has the serenity, the surface smoothness, and the freshness of a lake. There is no character in women's faces before the age of thirty. The painter discovers nothing there but pink and white, and the smile and expression that repeat the same thought in the same way—a thought of youth and love that goes no further than youth and love. But the face of an old woman has expressed all that lay in her nature; passion has carved lines on her features; love and wifehood and motherhood, and extremes of joy and anguish, have wrung them, and left their traces in a thousand wrinkles, all of which speak a language of their own; then is it that a woman's face becomes sublime in its horror, beautiful in its melancholy, grand in its calm. If it is permissible to carry the strange metaphor still further, it might be said that in the dried-up lake you can see the traces of all the torrents that once poured into it and made it what it is. An old face is nothing to the frivolous world; the frivolous world is shocked by the sight of the destruction of such comeliness as it can understand; a commonplace artist sees nothing there. An old face is the province of the poets among poets of those who can recognize that something which is called Beauty, apart

from all the conventions underlying so many superstitions in art and taste.

Though Mme. d'Aiglemont wore a fashionable bonnet, it was easy to see that her once black hair had been bleached by cruel sorrows; yet her good taste and the gracious acquired instincts of a woman of fashion could be seen in the way she wore it, divided into two *bandeaux,* following the outlines of a forehead that still retained some traces of former dazzling beauty, worn and lined though it was. The contours of her face, the regularity of her features, gave some idea, faint in truth, of that beauty of which surely she had once been proud; but those traces spoke still more plainly of the anguish which had laid it waste, of sharp pain that had withered the temples, and made those hollows in her cheeks, and empurpled the eyelids, and robbed them of their lashes, and the eyes of their charm. She was in every way so noiseless; she moved with a slow, self-contained gravity that showed itself in her whole bearing, and struck a certain awe into others. Her diffident manner had changed to positive shyness, due apparently to a habit now of some years' growth, of effacing herself in her daughter's presence. She spoke very seldom, and in the low tones used by those who perforce must live within themselves a life of reflection and concentration. This demeanor led others to regard her with an indefinable feeling which was neither awe nor compassion, but a mysterious blending of the many ideas awakened in us by compassion and awe. Finally, there was something in her wrinkles, in the lines of her face, in the look of pain in those wan eyes of hers, that bore eloquent testimony to tears that never had fallen, tears that had been absorbed by her heart. Unhappy creatures, accustomed to raise their eyes to heaven, in mute appeal against the bitterness of their lot, would have seen at once from her eyes that she was broken in to the cruel discipline of ceaseless prayer, would have discerned the almost imperceptible symptoms of the secret bruises which destroy all the flowers of the soul, even the sentiment of motherhood.

Painters have colors for these portraits, but words, and the mental images called up by words, fail to reproduce such impressions faithfully; there are mysterious signs and tokens in the tones of the coloring and in the look of human faces, which the mind only seizes through the sense of sight; and the poet is fain to record the tale of the events which wrought the havoc to make their terrible ravages understood.

The face spoke of cold and steady storm, an inward conflict between a mother's long-suffering and the limitations of our nature, for our human affections are bounded by our humanity, and the infinite has no place in finite creatures. Sorrow endured in silence had at last produced an indefinable morbid something in this woman. Doubtless mental anguish had reacted on the physical frame, and some disease, perhaps an aneurism, was undermining Julie's life. Deep-seated grief lies to all appearance very quietly in the depths where it is conceived, yet, so still and apparently dormant as it is, it ceaselessly corrodes the soul, like the terrible acid which eats away crystal.

Two tears made their way down the Marquise's cheeks; she rose to her feet as if some thought more poignant than any that preceded it had cut her to the quick. She had doubtless come to a conclusion as to Moïna's future; and now, foreseeing clearly all the troubles in store for her child, the sorrows of her own unhappy life had begun to weigh once more upon her. The key of her position must be sought in her daughter's situation.

The Comte de Saint-Héreen had been away for nearly six months on a political mission. The Countess, whether from sheer giddiness, or in obedience to the countless instincts of woman's coquetry, or to essay its power—with all the vanity of a frivolous fine lady, all the capricious waywardness of a child—was amusing herself, during her husband's absence, by playing with the passion of a clever but heartless man, distracted (so he said) with love, the love that combines readily with every petty social ambition of a self-conceited coxcomb. Mme. d'Aiglemont, whose long experience had given her a

knowledge of life, and taught her to judge of men and to dread the world, watched the course of this flirtation, and saw that it could only end in one way, if her daughter should fall into the hands of an utterly unscrupulous intriguer. How could it be other than a terrible thought for her that her daughter listened willingly to this *roué?* Her darling stood on the brink of a precipice, she felt horribly sure of it, yet dared not hold her back. She was afraid of the Countess. She knew too that Moïna would not listen to her wise warnings; she knew that she had no influence over that nature—iron for her, silken-soft for all others. Her mother's tenderness might have led her to sympathize with the troubles of a passion called forth by the nobler qualities of a lover, but this was no passion—it was coquetry, and the Marquise despised Alfred de Vandenesse, knowing that he had entered upon this flirtation with Moïna as if it were a game of chess.

But if Alfred de Vandenesse made her shudder with disgust, she was obliged—unhappy mother!—to conceal the strongest reason for her loathing in the deepest recesses of her heart. She was on terms of intimate friendship with the Marquis de Vandenesse, the young man's father; and this friendship, a respectable one in the eyes of the world, excused the son's constant presence in the house, he professing an old attachment, dating from childhood, for Mme. de Saint-Héreen. More than this, in vain did Mme. d'Aiglemont nerve herself to come between Moïna and Alfred de Vandenesse with a terrible word, knowing beforehand that she should not succeed; knowing that the strong reason which ought to separate them would carry no weight; that she should humiliate herself vainly in her daughter's eyes. Alfred was too corrupt; Moïna too clever to believe the revelation; the young Countess would turn it off and treat it as a piece of maternal strategy. Mme. d'Aiglemont had built her prison walls with her own hands; she had immured herself only to see Moïna's happiness ruined thence before she died; she was to look on helplessly at the ruin of the young life which had been her pride and joy and comfort, a life a thousand times

dearer to her than her own. What words can describe anguish so hideous beyond belief, such unfathomed depths of pain?

She waited for Moïna to rise, with the impatience and sickening dread of a doomed man, who longs to have done with life, and turns cold at the thought of the headsman. She had braced herself for a last effort, but perhaps the prospect of the certain failure of the attempt was less dreadful to her than the fear of receiving yet again one of those thrusts that went to her very heart—before that fear her courage ebbed away. Her mother's love had come to this. To love her child, to be afraid of her, to shrink from the thought of the stab, yet to go forward. So great is a mother's affection in a loving nature, that before it can fade away into indifference the mother herself must die or find support in some great power without her, in religion or another love. Since the Marquise rose that morning, her fatal memory had called up before her some of those things, so slight to all appearance, that make landmarks in a life. Sometimes, indeed, a whole tragedy grows out of a single gesture; the tone in which a few words were spoken rends a whole life in two; a glance into indifferent eyes is the deathblow of the gladdest love; and, unhappily, such gestures and such words were only too familiar to Mme. d'Aiglemont—she had met so many glances that wound the soul. No, there was nothing in those memories to bid her hope. On the contrary, everything went to show that Alfred had destroyed her hold on her daughter's heart, that the thought of her was now associated with duty—not with gladness. In ways innumerable, in things that were mere trifles in themselves, the Countess' detestable conduct rose up before her mother; and the Marquise, it may be, looked on Moïna's undutifulness as a punishment, and found excuses for her daughter in the will of Heaven, that so she still might adore the hand that smote her.

All these things passed through her memory that morning, and each recollection wounded her afresh so sorely, that with a very little additional pain her brimming cup of bitterness must have overflowed. A cold look might kill her.

The little details of domestic life are difficult to paint; but one or two perhaps will suffice to give an idea of the rest.

The Marquise d'Aiglemont, for instance, had grown rather deaf, but she could never induce Moïna to raise her voice for her. Once, with the naïveté of suffering, she had begged Moïna to repeat some remark which she had failed to catch, and Moïna obeyed, but with so bad a grace, that Mme. d'Aiglemont had never permitted herself to make her modest request again. Ever since that day when Moïna was talking or retailing a piece of news, her mother was careful to come near to listen; but this infirmity of deafness appeared to put the Countess out of patience, and she would grumble thoughtlessly about it. This instance is one from among very many that must have gone to the mother's heart; and yet nearly all of them might have escaped a close observer, they consisted in faint shades of manner invisible to any but a woman's eyes. Take another example. Mme. d'Aiglemont happened to say one day that the Princesse de Cadignan had called upon her. "Did she come to see *you!*" Moïna exclaimed. That was all; but the Countess' voice and manner expressed surprise and well-bred contempt in semitones. Any heart, still young and sensitive, might well have applauded the philanthropy of savage tribes who kill off their old people when they grow too feeble to cling to a strongly shaken bough. Mme. d'Aiglemont rose smiling, and went away to weep alone.

Well-bred people, and women especially, only betray their feelings by imperceptible touches; but those who can look back over their own experience on such bruises as this mother's heart received, know also how the heart-strings vibrate to these light touches. Overcome by her memories, Mme. d'Aiglemont recollected one of those microscopically small things, so stinging and so painful was it that never till this moment had she felt all the heartless contempt that lurked beneath smiles.

At the sound of shutters thrown back at her daughter's windows, she dried her tears, and hastened up the pathway

by the railings. As she went, it struck her that the gardener had been unusually careful to rake the sand along the walk which had been neglected for some little time. As she stood under her daughter's windows, the shutters were hastily closed.

"Moïna, is it you?" she asked.

No answer.

The Marquise went on into the house.

"Mme. la Comtesse is in the little drawing-room," said the maid, when the Marquise asked whether Mme. de Saint-Héreen had finished dressing.

Mme. d'Aiglemont hurried to the little drawing-room; her heart was too full, her brain too busy to notice matters so slight; but there on a sofa sat the Countess in her loose morning-gown, her hair in disorder under the cap tossed carelessly on her head, her feet thrust into slippers. The key of her bedroom hung at her girdle. Her face, aglow with color, bore traces of almost stormy thought.

"What makes people come in!" she cried, crossly. "Oh! it is you, mother," she interrupted herself, with a preoccupied look.

"Yes, child; it is your mother——"

Something in her tone turned those words into an outpouring of the heart, the cry of some deep inward feeling, only to be described by the word "holy." So thoroughly in truth had she rehabilitated the sacred character of a mother, that her daughter was impressed, and turned towards her, with something of awe, uneasiness, and remorse in her manner. The room was the furthest of a suite, and safe from indiscreet intrusion, for no one could enter it without giving warning of approach through the previous apartments. The Marquise closed the door.

"It is my duty, my child, to warn you in one of the most serious crises in the lives of us women; you have perhaps reached it unconsciously, and I am come to speak to you as a friend rather than as a mother. When you married, you acquired freedom of action; you are only accountable to your

husband now; but I asserted my authority so little (perhaps I was wrong), that I think I have a right to expect you to listen to me, for once at least, in a critical position when you must need counsel. Bear in mind, Moïna, that you are married to a man of high ability, a man of whom you may well be proud, a man who——"

"I know what you are going to say, mother!" Moïna broke in pettishly. "I am to be lectured about Alfred——"

"Moïna," the Marquise said gravely, as she struggled with her tears, "you would not guess at once if you did not feel——"

"What?" asked Moïna, almost haughtily. "Why, really, mother——"

Mme. d'Aiglemont summoned up all her strength. "Moïna," she said, "you must attend carefully to this that I ought to tell you——"

"I am attending," returned the Countess, folding her arms, and affecting insolent submission. "Permit me, mother, to ring for Pauline," she added with incredible self-possession; "I will send her away first."

She rang the bell.

"My dear child, Pauline cannot possibly hear——"

"Mamma," interrupted the Countess, with a gravity which must have struck her mother as something unusual, "I must——"

She stopped short, for the woman was in the room.

"Pauline, go *yourself* to Baudran's, and ask why my hat has not yet been sent."

Then the Countess reseated herself and scrutinized her mother. The Marquise, with a swelling heart and dry eyes, in painful agitation, which none but a mother can fully understand, began to open Moïna's eyes to the risk that she was running. But either the Countess felt hurt and indignant at her mother's suspicions of a son of the Marquis de Vandenesse, or she was seized with a sudden fit of inexplicable levity caused by the inexperience of youth. She took advantage of a pause.

"Mamma, I thought you were only jealous of *the father* ——" she said, with a forced laugh.

Mme. d'Aiglemont shut her eyes and bent her head at the words, with a very faint, almost inaudible sigh. She looked up and out into space, as if she felt the common overmastering impulse to appeal to God at the great crises of our lives; then she looked at her daughter, and her eyes were full of awful majesty and the expression of profound sorrow.

"My child," she said, and her voice was hardly recognizable, "you have been less merciful to your mother than he against whom she sinned; less merciful than perhaps God Himself will be!"

Mme. d'Aiglemont rose; at the door she turned; but she saw nothing but surprise in her daughter's face. She went out. Scarcely had she reached the garden when her strength failed her. There was a violent pain at her heart, and she sank down on a bench. As her eyes wandered over the path, she saw fresh marks on the path, a man's footprints were distinctly recognizable. It was too late, then, beyond a doubt. Now she began to understand the reason for that order given to Pauline, and with these torturing thoughts came a revelation more hateful than any that had gone before it. She drew her own inferences—the son of the Marquis de Vandenesse had destroyed all feeling of respect for her in her daughter's mind. The physical pain grew worse; by degrees she lost consciousness, and sat like one asleep upon the garden-seat.

The Countess de Saint-Héreen, left to herself, thought that her mother had given her a somewhat shrewd home-thrust, but a kiss and a few attentions that evening would make all right again.

A shrill cry came from the garden. She leaned carelessly out, as Pauline, not yet departed on her errand, called out for help, holding the Marquise in her arms.

"Do not frighten my daughter!" those were the last words the mother uttered.

Moïna saw them carry in a pale and lifeless form that

struggled for breath, and arms moving restlessly as in protest or effort to speak; and overcome by the sight, Moïna followed in silence, and helped to undress her mother and lay her on her bed. The burden of her fault was greater than she could bear. In that supreme hour she learned to know her mother—too late, she could make no reparation now. She would have them leave her alone with her mother; and when there was no one else in the room, when she felt that the hand which had always been so tender for her was now grown cold to her touch, she broke out into weeping. Her tears aroused the Marquise; she could still look at her darling Moïna; and at the sound of sobbing, that seemed as if it must rend the delicate, disheveled breast, could smile back at her daughter. That smile taught the unnatural child that forgiveness is always to be found in the great deep of a mother's heart.

Servants on horseback had been dispatched at once for the physician and surgeon and for Mme. d'Aiglemont's grandchildren. Mme. d'Aiglemont the younger and her little sons arrived with the medical men, a sufficiently impressive, silent, and anxious little group, which the servants of the house came to join. The young Marquise, hearing no sound, tapped gently at the door. That signal, doubtless, roused Moïna from her grief, for she flung open the doors and stood before them. No words could have spoken more plainly than that disheveled figure looking out with haggard eyes upon the assembled family. Before that living picture of Remorse the rest were dumb. It was easy to see that the Marquise's feet were stretched out stark and stiff with the agony of death; and Moïna, leaning against the door-frame, looking into their faces, spoke in a hollow voice:

"I have lost my mother!"

Paris, 1828–1844.

THE DESERTED WOMAN

To Her Grace the Duchesse d'Abrantès,
from her devoted servant,
Honoré de Balzac.

Paris, *August* 1835.

In the early spring of 1822, the Paris doctors sent to Lower Normandy a young man just recovering from an inflammatory complaint, brought on by overstudy, or perhaps by excess of some other kind. His convalescence demanded complete rest, a light diet, bracing air, and freedom from excitement of every kind, and the fat lands of Bessin seemed to offer all these conditions of recovery. To Bayeux, a picturesque place about six miles from the sea, the patient therefore betook himself, and was received with the cordiality characteristic of relatives who lead very retired lives, and regard a new arrival as a godsend.

All little towns are alike, save for a few local customs. When M. le Baron Gaston de Nueil, the young Parisian in question, had spent two or three evenings in his cousin's house, or with the friends who made up Mme. de Sainte-Sevère's circle, he very soon had made the acquaintance of the persons whom this exclusive society considered to be "the whole town." Gaston de Nueil recognized in them the invariable stock characters which every observer finds in every one of the many capitals of the little States which made up the France of an older day.

First of all comes the family whose claims to nobility are regarded as incontestable, and of the highest antiquity in the department, though no one has so much as heard of them a bare fifty leagues away. This species of royal family on a small scale is distantly, but unmistakably, connected with the

Navarreins and the Grandlieu family, and related to the Cadignans, and the Blamont-Chauvrys. The head of the illustrious house is invariably a determined sportsman. He has no manners, crushes everybody else with his nominal superiority, tolerates the sub-prefect much as he submits to the taxes, and declines to acknowledge any of the novel powers created by the nineteenth century, pointing out to you as a political monstrosity the fact that the prime minister is a man of no birth. His wife takes a decided tone, and talks in a loud voice. She has had adorers in her time, but takes the sacrament regularly at Easter. She brings up her daughters badly, and is of the opinion that they will always be rich enough with their name.

Neither husband nor wife has the remotest idea of modern luxury. They retain a livery only seen elsewhere on the stage, and cling to old fashions in plate, furniture, and equipages, as in language and manner of life. This is a kind of ancient state, moreover, that suits passably well with provincial thrift. The good folk are, in fact, the lords of the manor of a bygone age, *minus* the quitrents and heriots, the pack of hounds and the laced coats; full of honor among themselves, and one and all loyally devoted to princes whom they only see at a distance. The historical house *incognito* is as quaint a survival as a piece of ancient tapestry. Vegetating somewhere among them there is sure to be an uncle or a brother, a lieutenant-general, an old courtier of the King's, who wears the red ribbon of the order of Saint-Louis, and went to Hanover with the Maréchal de Richelieu and here you will find him like a stray leaf out of some old pamphlet of the time of Louis Quinze.

This fossil greatness finds a rival in another house, wealthier, though of less ancient lineage. Husband and wife spend a couple of months of every winter in Paris, bringing back with them its frivolous tone and short-lived contemporary crazes. Madame is a woman of fashion, though she looks rather conscious of her clothes, and is always behind the mode. She scoffs, however, at the ignorance affected by

her neighbors. *Her* plate is of modern fashion; she has "grooms," negroes, a valet-de-chambre, and what-not. Her oldest son drives a tilbury, and does nothing (the estate is entailed upon him), his younger brother is auditor to a Council of State. The father is well posted up in official scandals, and tells you anecdotes of Louis XVIII. and Madame du Cayla. He invests his money in the five per cents, and is careful to avoid the topic of cider, but has been known occasionally to fall a victim to the craze for rectifying the conjectural sums-total of the various fortunes of the department. He is a member of the Departmental Council, has his clothes from Paris, and wears the Cross of the Legion of Honor. In short, he is a country gentleman who has fully grasped the significance of the Restoration, and is coining money at the Chamber, but his Royalism is less pure than that of the rival house; he takes the *Gazette* and the *Débats*, the other family only read the *Quotidienne*.

His lordship the Bishop, a sometime Vicar-General, fluctuates between the two powers, who pay him the respect due to religion, but at times they bring home to him the moral appended by the worthy Lafontaine to the fable of the *Ass laden with Relics*. The good man's origin is distinctly plebeian.

Then come stars of the second magnitude, men of family with ten or twelve hundred livres a year, captains in the navy or cavalry regiments, or nothing at all. Out on the roads, on horseback, they rank half-way between the curé bearing the sacraments and the tax collector on his rounds. Pretty nearly all of them have been in the Pages or in the Household Troops, and now are peaceably ending their days in a *faisance-valoir*, more interested in felling timber and the cider prospects than in the Monarchy.

Still they talk of the Charter and the Liberals while the cards are making, or over a game at backgammon, when they have exhausted the usual stock topic of *dots*, and have married everybody off according to the genealogies which they all know by heart. Their womenkind are haughty dames, who

assume the airs of Court ladies in their basket chaises. They huddle themselves up in shawls and caps by way of full dress; and twice a year, after ripe deliberation, have a new bonnet from Paris, brought as opportunity offers. Exemplary wives are they for the most part, and garrulous.

These are the principal elements of aristocratic gentility, with a few outlying old maids of good family, spinsters who have solved the problem: given a human being, to remain absolutely stationary. They might be sealed up in the houses where you see them; their faces and their dresses are literally part of the fixtures of the town, and the province in which they dwell. They are its tradition, its memory, its quintessence, the *genius loci* incarnate. There is something frigid and monumental about these ladies; they know exactly when to laugh and when to shake their heads, and every now and then give out some utterance which passes current as a witticism.

A few rich townspeople have crept into the miniature Faubourg Saint-Germain, thanks to their money or their aristocratic leanings. But despite their forty years, the circle still say of them, "Young So-and-so has sound opinions," and of such do they make deputies. As a rule, the elderly spinsters are their patronesses, not without comment.

Finally, in this exclusive little set include two or three ecclesiastics, admitted for the sake of their cloth, or for their wit; for these great nobles find their own society rather dull, and introduce the bourgeois element into their drawing-rooms, as a baker puts leaven into his dough.

The sum-total contained by all heads put together consists of a certain quantity of antiquated notions; a few new reflections brewed in company of an evening being added from time to time to the common stock. Like sea-water in a little creek, the phrases which represent these ideas surge up daily, punctually obeying the tidal laws of conversation in their flow and ebb; you hear the hollow echo of yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, a year hence, and for evermore. On all things here below they pass immutable judgments, which go to make

up a body of tradition into which no power of mortal man can infuse one drop of wit or sense. The lives of these persons revolve with the regularity of clockwork in an orbit of use and wont which admits of no more deviation or change than their opinions on matters religious, political, moral, or literary.

If a stranger is admitted to the *cénacle,* every member of it in turn will say (not without a trace of irony), "You will not find the brilliancy of your Parisian society here," and proceed forthwith to criticise the life led by his neighbors, as if he himself were an exception who had striven, and vainly striven, to enlighten the rest. But any stranger so ill advised as to concur in any of their freely expressed criticism of each other, is pronounced at once to be an ill-natured person, a heathen, an outlaw, a reprobate Parisian "as Parisians mostly are."

Before Gaston de Nueil made his appearance in this little world of strictly observed etiquette, where every detail of life is an integrant part of a whole, and everything is known; where the values of personalty and real estate are quoted like stocks on the vast sheet of the newspaper—before his arrival he had been weighed in the unerring scales of Bayeusaine judgment.

His cousin, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère, had already given out the amount of his fortune, and the sum of his expectations, had produced the family tree, and expatiated on the talents, breeding, and modesty of this particular branch. So he received the precise amount of attention to which he was entitled; he was accepted as a worthy scion of a good stock; and, for he was but twenty-three, was made welcome without ceremony, though certain young ladies and mothers of daughters looked not unkindly upon him.

He had an income of eighteen thousand livres from land in the valley of the Auge; and sooner or later his father, as in duty bound, would leave him the château of Manerville, with the lands thereunto belonging. As for his education, political career, personal qualities, and qualifications—no one

so much as thought of raising the questions. His land was undeniable, his rentals steady; excellent plantations had been made; the tenants paid for repairs, rates, and taxes; the apple-trees were thirty-eight years old; and, to crown all, his father was in treaty for two hundred acres of woodland just outside the paternal park, which he intended to enclose with walls. No hopes of a political career, no fame on earth, can compare with such advantages as these.

Whether out of malice or design, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère omitted to mention that Gaston had an elder brother; nor did Gaston himself say a word about him. But, at the same time, it is true that the brother was consumptive, and to all appearance would shortly be laid in earth, lamented and forgotten.

At first Gaston de Nueil amused himself at the expense of the circle. He drew, as it were, for his mental album, a series of portraits of these folk, with their angular, wrinkled faces, and hooked noses, their crochets and ludicrous eccentricities of dress, portraits which possessed all the racy flavor of truth. He delighted in their "Normanisms," in the primitive quaintness of their ideas and characters. For a short time he flung himself into their squirrel's life of busy gyrations in a cage. Then he began to feel the want of variety, and grew tired of it. It was like the life of the cloister, cut short before it had well begun. He drifted on till he reached a crisis, which is neither spleen nor disgust, but combines all the symptoms of both. When a human being is transplanted into an uncongenial soil, to lead a starved, stunted existence, there is always a little discomfort over the transition. Then, gradually, if nothing removes him from his surroundings, he grows accustomed to them, and adapts himself to the vacuity which grows upon him and renders him powerless. Even now, Gaston's lungs were accustomed to the air; and he was willing to discern a kind of vegetable happiness in days that brought no mental exertion and no responsibilities. The constant stirring of the sap of life, the fertilizing influences of mind on mind, after which he had

sought so eagerly in Paris, were beginning to fade from his memory, and he was in a fair way of becoming a fossil with these fossils, and ending his days among them, content, like the companions of Ulysses, in his gross envelope.

One evening Gaston de Nueil was seated between a dowager and one of the vicars-general of the diocese, in a gray-paneled drawing-room, floored with large white tiles. The family portraits which adorned the walls looked down upon four card-tables, and some sixteen persons gathered about them, chattering over their whist. Gaston, thinking of nothing, digesting one of those exquisite dinners to which the provincial looks forward all through the day, found himself justifying the customs of the country.

He began to understand why these good folk continued to play with yesterday's pack of cards and shuffle them on a threadbare tablecloth, and how it was that they had ceased to dress for themselves or others. He saw the glimmerings of something like a philosophy in the even tenor of their perpetual round, in the calm of their methodical monotony, in their ignorance of the refinements of luxury. Indeed, he almost came to think that luxury profited nothing; and even now, the city of Paris, with its passions, storms, and pleasures, was scarcely more than a memory of childhood.

He admired in all sincerity the red hands, and shy, bashful manner of some young lady who at first struck him as an awkward simpleton, unattractive to the last degree, and surpassingly ridiculous. His doom was sealed. He had gone from the provinces to Paris; he had led the feverish life of Paris; and now he would have sunk back into the lifeless life of the provinces, but for a chance remark which reached his ear—a few words that called up a swift rush of such emotion as he might have felt when a strain of really great music mingles with the accompaniment of some tedious opera.

"You went to call on Mme. de Beauséant yesterday, did you not?" The speaker was an elderly lady, and she addressed the head of the local royal family.

"I went this morning. She was so poorly and depressed, that I could not persuade her to dine with us to-morrow."

"With Mme. de Champignelles?" exclaimed the dowager, with something like astonishment in her manner.

"With my wife," calmly assented the noble. "Mme. de Beauséant is descended from the House of Burgundy, on the spindle side, 'tis true, but the name atones for everything. My wife is very much attached to the Vicomtesse, and the poor lady has lived alone for such a long while, that——"

The Marquis de Champignelles looked round about him while he spoke with an air of cool unconcern, so that it was almost impossible to guess whether he made a concession to Mme. de Beauséant's misfortunes, or paid homage to her noble birth; whether he felt flattered to receive her in his house, or, on the contrary, sheer pride was the motive that led him to try to force the country families to meet the Vicomtesse.

The women appeared to take counsel of each other by a glance; there was a sudden silence in the room, and it was felt that their attitude was one of disapproval.

"Does this Mme. de Beauséant happen to be the lady whose adventure with M. d'Ajuda-Pinto made so much noise?" asked Gaston of his neighbor.

"The very same," he was told. "She came to Courcelles after the marriage of the Marquis d'Ajuda; nobody visits her. She has, besides, too much sense not to see that she is in a false position, so she has made no attempt to see any one. M. de Champignelles and a few gentlemen went to call upon her, but she would see no one but M. de Champignelles, perhaps because he is a connection of the family. They are related through the Beauséants; the father of the present Vicomte married a Mlle. de Champignelles of the older branch. But though the Vicomtesse de Beauséant is supposed to be a descendant of the House of Burgundy, you can understand that we could not admit a wife separated from her husband into our society here. We are foolish enough still to cling to these old-fashioned ideas. There was the less excuse for the Vicomtesse, because M. de Beauséant is a well-bred man of the world, who would have been quite ready to listen to

reason. But his wife is quite mad——" and so forth and so forth.

M. de Nueil, still listening to the speaker's voice, gathered nothing of the sense of the words; his brain was too full of thick-coming fancies. Fancies? What other name can you give to the alluring charms of an adventure that tempts the imagination and sets vague hopes springing up in the soul; to the sense of coming events and mysterious felicity and fear at hand, while as yet there is no substance of fact on which these phantoms of caprice can fix and feed? Over these fancies thought hovers, conceiving impossible projects, giving in the germ all the joys of love. Perhaps, indeed, all passion is contained in that thought-germ, as the beauty, and fragrance, and rich color of the flower is all packed in the seed.

M. de Nueil did not know that Mme. de Beauséant had taken refuge in Normandy, after a notoriety which women for the most part envy and condemn, especially when youth and beauty in some sort excuse the transgression. Any sort of celebrity bestows an inconceivable prestige. Apparently for women, as for families, the glory of the crime effaces the stain; and if such and such a noble house is proud of its tale of heads that have fallen on the scaffold, a young and pretty woman becomes more interesting for the dubious renown of a happy love or a scandalous desertion, and the more she is to be pitied, the more she excites our sympathies. We are only pitiless to the commonplace. If, moreover, we attract all eyes, we are to all intents and purposes great; how, indeed, are we to be seen unless we raise ourselves above other people's heads? The common herd of humanity feels an involuntary respect for any person who can rise above it, and is not over-particular as to the means by which they rise.

It may have been that some such motives influenced Gaston de Nueil at unawares, or perhaps it was curiosity, or a craving for some interest in his life; or, in a word, that crowd of inexplicable impulses which, for want of a better name, we are wont to call "fatality," that drew him to Mme. de Beauséant.

The figure of the Vicomtesse de Beauséant rose up sud-

denly before him with gracious thronging associations. She was a new world for him, a world of fears and hopes, a world to fight for and to conquer. Inevitably he felt the contrast between this vision and the human beings in the shabby room; and then, in truth, she was a woman; what woman had he seen so far in this dull, little world, where calculation replaced thought and feeling, where courtesy was a cut-and-dried formality, and ideas of the very simplest were too alarming to be received or to pass current? The sound of Mme. de Beauséant's name revived a young man's dreams and wakened urgent desires that had lain dormant for a little.

Gaston de Nueil was absent-minded and preoccupied for the rest of that evening. He was pondering how he might gain access to Mme. de Beauséant, and truly it was no very easy matter. She was believed to be extremely clever. But if men and women of parts may be captivated by something subtle or eccentric, they are also exacting, and can read all that lies below the surface; and after the first step has been taken, the chances of failure and success in the difficult task of pleasing them are about even. In this particular case, moreover, the Vicomtesse, besides the pride of her position, had all the dignity of her name. Her utter seclusion was the least of the barriers raised between her and the world. For which reasons it was well-nigh impossible that a stranger, however well born, could hope for admittance; and yet, the next morning found M. de Nueil taking his walks abroad in the direction of Courcelles, a dupe of illusions natural at his age. Several times he made the circuit of the garden walls, looking earnestly through every gap at the closed shutters or open windows, hoping for some romantic chance, on which he founded schemes for introducing himself into this unknown lady's presence, without a thought of their impracticability. Morning after morning was spent in this way to mighty little purpose; but with each day's walk, that vision of a woman living apart from the world, of love's martyr buried in solitude, loomed larger in his thoughts, and was enshrined in his soul. So Gaston de Nueil walked under the

walls of Courcelles, and some gardener's heavy footstep would set his heart beating high with hope.

He thought of writing to Mme. de Beauséant, but on mature consideration, what can you say to a woman whom you have never seen, a complete stranger? And Gaston had little self-confidence. Like most young persons with a plentiful crop of illusions still standing, he dreaded the mortifying contempt of silence more than death itself, and shuddered at the thought of sending his first tender epistle forth to face so many chances of being thrown on the fire. He was distracted by innumerable conflicting ideas. But by dint of inventing chimeras, weaving romances, and cudgeling his brains, he hit at last upon one of the hopeful stratagems that are sure to occur to your mind if you persevere long enough, a stratagem which must make clear to the most inexperienced woman that here was a man who took a fervent interest in her. The caprice of social conventions puts as many barriers between lovers as any Oriental imagination can devise in the most delightfully fantastic tale; indeed, the most extravagant pictures are seldom exaggerations. In real life, as in the fairy tales, the woman belongs to him who can reach her and set her free from the position in which she languishes. The poorest of calenders that ever fell in love with the daughter of the Khalif is in truth scarcely further from his lady than Gaston de Nueil from Mme. de Beauséant. The Vicomtesse knew absolutely nothing of M. de Nueil's wanderings round her house; Gaston de Nueil's love grew to the height of the obstacles to overleap; and the distance set between him and his extemporized lady-love produced the usual effect of distance, in lending enchantment.

One day, confident in his inspiration, he hoped everything from the love that must pour forth from his eyes. Spoken words, in his opinion, were more eloquent than the most passionate letter; and, besides, he would engage feminine curiosity to plead for him. He went, therefore, to M. de Champignelles, proposing to employ that gentleman for the better success of his enterprise. He informed the Marquis

that he had been entrusted with a delicate and important commission which concerned the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, that he felt doubtful whether she would read a letter written in an unknown handwriting, or put confidence in a stranger. Would M. de Champignelles, on his next visit, ask the Vicomtesse if she would consent to receive him—Gaston de Nueil? While he asked the Marquis to keep his secret in case of a refusal, he very ingeniously insinuated sufficient reasons for his own admittance, to be duly passed on to the Vicomtesse. Was not M. de Champignelles a man of honor, a loyal gentleman incapable of lending himself to any transaction in bad taste, nay, the merest suspicion of bad taste! Love lends a young man all the self-possession and astute craft of an old ambassador; all the Marquis' harmless vanities were gratified, and the haughty grandee was completely duped. He tried hard to fathom Gaston's secret; but the latter, who would have been greatly perplexed to tell it, turned off M. de Champignelles' adroit questioning with a Norman's shrewdness, till the Marquis, as a gallant Frenchman, complimented his young visitor upon his discretion.

M. de Champignelles hurried off at once to Courcelles, with that eagerness to serve a pretty woman which belongs to his time of life. In the Vicomtesse de Beauséant's position, such a message was likely to arouse keen curiosity; so, although her memory supplied no reason at all that could bring M. de Nueil to her house, she saw no objection to his visit—after some prudent inquiries as to his family and condition. At the same time, she began by a refusal. Then she discussed the propriety of the matter with M. de Champignelles, directing her questions so as to discover, if possible, whether he knew the motives for the visit, and finally revoked her negative answer. The discussion and the discretion shown perforce by the Marquis had piqued her curiosity.

M. de Champignelles had no mind to cut a ridiculous figure. He said, with the air of a man who can keep another's counsel, that the Vicomtesse must know the purpose of this visit perfectly well; while the Vicomtesse, in all sincerity, had no

notion what it could be. Mme. de Beauséant, in perplexity, connected Gaston with people whom he had never met, went astray after various wild conjectures, and asked herself if she had seen this M. de Nueil before. In truth, no love-letter, however sincere or skilfully indited, could have produced so much effect as this riddle. Again and again Mme. de Beauséant puzzled over it.

When Gaston heard that he might call upon the Vicomtesse, his rapture at so soon obtaining the ardently longed-for good fortune was mingled with singular embarrassment. How was he to contrive a suitable sequel to this stratagem?

"Bah! I shall see *her*," he said over and over again to himself as he dressed. "See her, and that is everything!"

He fell to hoping that once across the threshold of Courcelles he should find an expedient for unfastening this Gordian knot of his own tying. There are believers in the omnipotence of necessity who never turn back; the close presence of danger is an inspiration that calls out all their powers for victory. Gaston de Nueil was one of these.

He took particular pains with his dress, imagining, as youth is apt to imagine, that success or failure hangs on the position of a curl, and ignorant of the fact that anything is charming in youth. And, in any case, such women as Mme. de Beauséant are only attracted by the charms of wit or character of an unusual order. Greatness of character flatters their vanity, promises a great passion, seems to imply a comprehension of the requirements of their hearts. Wit amuses them, responds to the subtlety of their natures, and they think that they are understood. And what do all women wish but to be amused, understood, or adored? It is only after much reflection on the things of life that we understand the consummate coquetry of neglect of dress and reserve at a first interview; and by the time we have gained sufficient astuteness for successful strategy, we are too old to profit by our experience.

While Gaston's lack of confidence in his mental equipment

drove him to borrow charms from his clothes, Madame de Beauséant herself was instinctively giving more attention to her toilette.

"I would rather not frighten people, at all events," she said to herself as she arranged her hair.

In M. de Nueil's character, person, and manner there was that touch of unconscious originality which gives a kind of flavor to things that any one might say or do, and absolves everything that they may choose to do or say. He was highly cultivated, he had a keen brain, and a face, mobile as his own nature, which won the goodwill of others. The promise of passion and tenderness in the bright eyes was fulfilled by an essentially kindly heart. The resolution which he made as he entered the house at Courcelles was in keeping with his frank nature and ardent imagination. But, bold as he was with love, his heart beat violently when he had crossed the great court, laid out like an English garden, and the man-servant, who had taken his name to the Vicomtesse, returned to say that she would receive him.

"M. le Baron de Nueil."

Gaston came in slowly, but with sufficient ease of manner; and it is a more difficult thing, be it said, to enter a room where there is but one woman, than a room that holds a score.

A great fire was burning on the hearth in spite of the mild weather, and by the soft light of the candles in the sconces he saw a young woman sitting on a high-backed *bergère* in the angle by the hearth. The seat was so low that she could move her head freely; every turn of it was full of grace and delicate charm, whether she bent, leaning forward, or raised and held it erect, slowly and languidly, as though it were a heavy burden, so low that she could cross her feet and let them appear, or draw them back under the folds of a long black dress.

The Vicomtesse made as if she would lay the book that she was reading on a small, round stand; but as she did so, she turned towards M. de Nueil, and the volume, insecurely

laid upon the edge, fell to the ground between the stand and the sofa. This did not seem to disconcert her. She looked up, bowing almost imperceptibly in response to his greeting, without rising from the depths of the low chair in which she lay. Bending forwards, she stirred the fire briskly, and stooped to pick up a fallen glove, drawing it mechanically over her left hand, while her eyes wandered in search of its fellow. The glance was instantly checked, however, for she stretched out a thin, white, all-but-transparent right hand, with flawless ovals of rose-colored nail at the tips of the slender, ringless fingers, and pointed to a chair as if to bid Gaston be seated. He sat down, and she turned her face questioningly towards him. Words cannot describe the subtlety of the winning charm and inquiry in that gesture; deliberate in its kindliness, gracious yet accurate in expression, it was the outcome of early education and of a constant use and wont of the graciousness of life. These movements of hers, so swift, so deft, succeeded each other so smoothly, that Gaston de Nueil was fascinated by the blending of a pretty woman's fastidious carelessness with the high-bred manner of a great lady.

Mme. de Beauséant stood out in such strong contrast against the automatons among whom he had spent two months of exile in that out-of-the-world district of Normandy, that he could not but find in her the realization of his romantic dreams; and, on the other hand, he could not compare her perfections with those of other women whom he had formerly admired. Here in her presence, in a drawing-room like some salon in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, full of costly trifles lying about upon the tables, and flowers and books, he felt as if he were back in Paris. It was a real Parisian carpet beneath his feet, he saw once more the high-bred type of Parisienne, the fragile outlines of her form, her exquisite charm, her disdain of the studied effects which did so much to spoil provincial women.

Mme. de Beauséant had fair hair and dark eyes, and the pale complexion that belongs to fair hair. She held up her

brow nobly like some fallen angel, grown proud through the fall, disdainful of pardon. Her way of gathering her thick hair into a crown of plaits above the broad, curving lines of the bandeaux upon her forehead, added to the queenliness of her face. Imagination could discover the ducal coronet of Burgundy in the spiral threads of her golden hair; all the courage of her house seemed to gleam from the great lady's brilliant eyes, such courage as women use to repel audacity or scorn, for they were full of tenderness for gentleness. The outline of that little head, so admirably poised above the long, white throat, the delicate, fine features, the subtle curves of the lips, the mobile face itself, wore an expression of delicate discretion, a faint semblance of irony suggestive of craft and insolence. Yet it would have been difficult to refuse forgiveness to those two feminine failings in her; for the lines that came out in her forehead whenever her face was not in repose, like her upward glances (that pathetic trick of manner), told unmistakably of unhappiness, of a passion that had all but cost her her life. A woman, sitting in the great, silent salon, a woman cut off from the rest of the world in this remote little valley, alone, with the memories of her brilliant, happy, and impassioned youth, of continual gaiety and homage paid on all sides, now replaced by the horrors of the void—was there not something in the sight to strike awe that deepened with reflection? Consciousness of her own value lurked in her smile. She was neither wife nor mother, she was an outlaw; she had lost the one heart that could set her pulses beating without shame; she had nothing from without to support her reeling soul; she must even look for strength from within, live her own life, cherish no hope save that of forsaken love, which looks forward to Death's coming, and hastens his lagging footsteps. And this while life was in its prime. Oh! to feel destined for happiness and to die—never having given nor received it! A woman too! What pain was this! These thoughts, flashing across M. de Nueil's mind like lightning, left him very humble in the presence of the greatest charm with which

woman can be invested. The triple aureole of beauty, nobleness, and misfortune dazzled him; he stood in dreamy, almost open-mouthed, admiration of the Vicomtesse. But he found nothing to say to her.

Mme. de Beauséant, by no means displeased, no doubt, by his surprise, held out her hand with a kindly but imperious gesture; then, summoning a smile to her pale lips, as if obeying, even yet, the woman's impulse to be gracious:

"I have heard from M. de Champignelles of a message which you have kindly undertaken to deliver, monsieur," she said. "Can it be from——"

With that terrible phrase Gaston understood, even more clearly than before, his own ridiculous position, the bad taste and bad faith of his behavior towards a woman so noble and so unfortunate. He reddened. The thoughts that crowded in upon him could be read in his troubled eyes; but suddenly, with the courage which youth draws from a sense of its own wrongdoing, he gained confidence, and very humbly interrupted Mme. de Beauséant.

"Madame," he faltered out, "I do not deserve the happiness of seeing you. I have deceived you basely. However strong the motive may have been, it can never excuse the pitiful subterfuge which I used to gain my end. But, madame, if your goodness will permit me to tell you——"

The Vicomtesse glanced at M. de Nueil, haughty disdain in her whole manner. She stretched her hand to the bell and rang it.

"Jacques," she said, "light this gentleman to the door," and she looked with dignity at the visitor.

She rose proudly, bowed to Gaston, and then stooped for the fallen volume. If all her movements on his entrance had been caressingly dainty and gracious, her every gesture now was no less severely frigid. M. de Nueil rose to his feet, but he stood waiting. Mme. de Beauséant flung another glance at him. "Well, why do you not go?" she seemed to say.

There was such cutting irony in that glance that Gaston grew white as if he were about to faint. Tears came into

his eyes, but he would not let them fall, and scorching shame and despair dried them. He looked back at Madame de Beauséant, and a certain pride and consciousness of his own worth was mingled with his humility; the Vicomtesse had a right to punish him, but ought she to use her right? Then he went out.

As he crossed the ante-chamber, a clear head, and wits sharpened by passion, were not slow to grasp the danger of his situation.

"If I leave this house, I can never come back to it again," he said to himself. "The Vicomtesse will always think of me as a fool. It is impossible that a woman, and such a woman, should not guess the love that she has called forth. Perhaps she feels a little, vague, involuntary regret for dismissing me so abruptly.—But she could not do otherwise, and she cannot recall her sentence. It rests with me to understand her."

At that thought Gaston stopped short on the flight of steps with an exclamation; he turned sharply, saying, "I have forgotten something," and went back to the salon. The lackey, all respect for a baron and the rights of property, was completely deceived by the natural utterance, and followed him. Gaston returned quietly and unannounced. The Vicomtesse, thinking that the intruder was the servant, looked up and beheld M. de Nueil.

"Jacques lighted me to the door," he said, with a half-sad smile which dispelled any suspicion of jest in those words, while the tone in which they were spoken went to the heart. Mme. de Beauséant was disarmed.

"Very well, take a seat," she said.

Gaston eagerly took possession of a chair. His eyes were shining with happiness; the Vicomtesse, unable to endure the brilliant light in them, looked down at the book. She was enjoying a delicious, ever new sensation; the sense of a man's delight in her presence is an unfailing feminine instinct. And then, besides, he had divined her, and a woman is so grateful to the man who has mastered the apparently ca-

pricious, yet logical, reasoning of her heart; who can track her thought through the seemingly contradictory workings of her mind, and read the sensations, or shy or bold, written in fleeting red, a bewildering maze of coquetry and self-revelation.

"Madame," Gaston exclaimed in a low voice, "my blunder you know, but you do not know how much I am to blame. If you only knew what joy it was to——"

"Ah! take care," she said, holding up one finger with an air of mystery, as she put out her hand towards the bell.

The charming gesture, the gracious threat, no doubt called up some sad thought, some memory of the old happy time when she could be wholly charming and gentle without an afterthought; when the gladness of her heart justified every caprice, and put charm into every least movement. The lines in her forehead gathered between her brows, and the expression of her face grew dark in the soft candle-light. Then looking across at M. de Nueil gravely but not unkindly, she spoke like a woman who deeply feels the meaning of every word.

"This is all very ridiculous! Once upon a time, monsieur, when thoughtless high spirits were my privilege, I should have laughed fearlessly over your visit with you. But now my life is very much changed. I cannot do as I like, I am obliged to think. What brings you here? Is it curiosity? In that case I am paying dearly for a little fleeting pleasure. Have you fallen *passionately* in love already with a woman whom you have never seen, a woman with whose name slander has, of course, been busy? If so, your motive in making this visit is based on disrespect, on an error which accident brought into notoriety."

She flung her book down scornfully upon the table, then, with a terrible look at Gaston, she went on: "Because I once was weak, must it be supposed that I am always weak? This is horrible, degrading. Or have you come here to pity me? You are very young to offer sympathy with heart troubles. Understand this clearly, sir, that I would rather have scorn than pity. I will not endure compassion from any one."

There was a brief pause.

"Well, sir," she continued (and the face that she turned to him was gentle and sad), "whatever motive induced this rash intrusion upon my solitude, it is very painful to me, you see. You are too young to be totally without good feeling, so surely you will feel that this behavior of yours is improper. I forgive you for it, and, as you see, I am speaking of it to you without bitterness. You will not come here again, will you? I am entreating when I might command. If you come to see me again, neither you nor I can prevent the whole place from believing that you are my lover, and you would cause me great additional annoyance. You do not mean to do that, I think."

She said no more, but looked at him with a great dignity which abashed him.

"I have done wrong, madame," he said, with deep feeling in his voice, "but it was through enthusiasm and thoughtlessness and eager desire of happiness, the qualities and defects of my age. Now, I understand that I ought not to have tried to see you," he added; "but, at the same time, the desire was a very natural one"—and making an appeal to feeling rather than to the intellect, he described the weariness of his enforced exile. He drew a portrait of a young man in whom the fires of life were burning themselves out, conveying the impression that here was a heart worthy of tender love, a heart which, notwithstanding, had never known the joys of love for a young and beautiful woman of refinement and taste. He explained, without attempting to justify, his unusual conduct. He flattered Mme. de Beauséant by showing that she had realized for him the ideal lady of a young man's dream, the ideal sought by so many, and so often sought in vain. Then he touched upon his morning prowlings under the walls of Courcelles, and his wild thoughts at the first sight of the house, till he excited that vague feeling of indulgence which a woman can find in her heart for the follies committed for her sake.

An impassioned voice was speaking in the chill solitude;

the speaker brought him with a warm breath of youth and the charms of a carefully cultivated mind. It was so long since Mme. de Beauséant had felt stirred by real feeling delicately expressed, that it affected her very strongly now. In spite of herself, she watched M. de Nueil's expressive face, and admired the noble countenance of a soul, unbroken as yet by the cruel discipline of the life of the world, unfretted by continual scheming to gratify personal ambition and vanity. Gaston was in the flower of his youth, he impressed her as a man with something in him, unaware as yet of the great career that lay before him. So both these two made reflections most dangerous for their peace of mind, and both strove to conceal their thoughts. M. de Nueil saw in the Vicomtesse a rare type of woman, always the victim of her perfection and tenderness; her graceful beauty is the least of her charms for those who are privileged to know the infinite of feeling and thought and goodness in the soul within; a woman whose instinctive feeling for beauty runs through all the most varied expressions of love, purifying its transports, turning them to something almost holy; wonderful secret of womanhood, the exquisite gift that Nature so seldom bestows. And the Vicomtesse, on her side, listening to the ring of sincerity in Gaston's voice, while he told of his youthful troubles, began to understand all that grown children of five-and-twenty suffer from diffidence, when hard work has kept them alike from corrupting influences and intercourse with men and women of the world whose sophistical reasoning and experience destroys the fair qualities of youth. Here was the ideal of women's dreams, a man unspoiled as yet by the egoism of family or success, or by that narrow selfishness which blights the first impulses of honor, devotion, self-sacrifice, and high demands of self; all the flowers so soon wither that enrich at first the life of delicate but strong emotions, and keep alive the loyalty of the heart.

But these two, once launched forth into the vast of sentiment, went far indeed in theory, sounding the depths in either soul, testing the sincerity of their expressions; only, whereas

Gaston's experiments were made unconsciously, Mme. de Beauséant had a purpose in all that she said. Bringing her natural and acquired subtlety to the work, she sought to learn M. de Nueil's opinions by advancing, as far as she could do so, views diametrically opposed to her own. So witty and so gracious was she, so much herself with this stranger, with whom she felt completely at ease, because she felt sure that they should never meet again, that, after some delicious epigram of hers, Gaston exclaimed unthinkingly:

"Oh! madame, how could any man have left you?"

The Vicomtesse was silent. Gaston reddened, he thought that he had offended her; but she was not angry. The first deep thrill of delight since the day of her calamity had taken her by surprise. The skill of the cleverest *roué* could not have made the impression that M. de Nueil made with that cry from the heart. That verdict wrung from a young man's candor gave her back innocence in her own eyes, condemned the world, laid the blame upon the lover who had left her, and justified her subsequent solitary drooping life. The world's absolution, the heartfelt sympathy, the social esteem so longed for, and so harshly refused, nay, all her secret desires were given her to the full in that exclamation, made fairer yet by the heart's sweetest flatteries and the admiration that women alway relish eagerly. He understood her, understood all, and he had given her, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the opportunity of rising higher through her fall. She looked at the clock.

"Ah! madame, do not punish me for my heedlessness. If you grant me but one evening, vouchsafe not to shorten it."

She smiled at the pretty speech.

"Well, as we must never meet again," she said, "what signifies a moment more or less? If you were to care for me, it would be a pity."

"It is too late now," he said.

"Do not tell me that," she answered gravely. "Under any other circumstances I should be very glad to see you. I will speak frankly, and you will understand how it is that I do

not choose to see you again, and ought not to do so. You have too much magnanimity not to feel that if I were so much as suspected of a second trespass, every one would think of me as a contemptible and vulgar woman; I should be like other women. A pure and blameless life will bring my character into relief. I am too proud not to endeavor to live like one apart in the world, a victim of the law through my marriage, man's victim through my love. If I were not faithful to the position which I have taken up, then I should deserve all the reproach that is heaped upon me; I should be lowered in my own eyes. I had not enough lofty social virtue to remain with a man whom I did not love. I have snapped the bonds of marriage in spite of the law; it was wrong, it was a crime, it was anything you like, but for me the bonds meant death. I meant to live. Perhaps if I had been a mother I could have endured the torture of a forced marriage of suitability. At eighteen we scarcely know what is done with us, poor girls that we are! I have broken the laws of the world, and the world has punished me; we both did rightly. I sought happiness. Is it not a law of our nature to seek for happiness? I was young, I was beautiful . . . I thought that I had found a nature as loving, as apparently passionate. I was loved indeed; for a little while . . ."

She paused.

"I used to think," she said, "that no one could leave a woman in such a position as mine. I have been forsaken; I must have offended in some way. Yes, in some way, no doubt, I failed to keep some law of our nature, was too loving, too devoted, too exacting—I do not know. Evil days have brought light with them? For a long while I blamed another, now I am content to bear the whole blame. At my own expense, I have absolved that other of whom I once thought I had a right to complain. I had not the art to keep him; fate has punished me heavily for my lack of skill. I only knew how to love; how can one keep oneself in mind when one loves? So I was a slave when I should have sought to be a tyrant. Those who know me may condemn me, but they

will respect me too. Pain has taught me that I must not lay myself open to this a second time. I cannot understand how it is that I am living yet, after the anguish of that first week of the most fearful crisis in a woman's life. Only from three years of loneliness would it be possible to draw strength to speak of that time as I am speaking now. Such agony, monsieur, usually ends in death; but this—well, it was the agony of death with no tomb to end it. Oh! I have known pain indeed!"

The Vicomtesse raised her beautiful eyes to the ceiling; and the cornice, no doubt, received all the confidences which a stranger might not hear. When a woman is afraid to look at her interlocutor, there is in truth no gentler, meeker, more accommodating confidante than the cornice. The cornice is quite an institution in the boudoir; what is it but the confessional, *minus* the priest?

Mme. de Beauséant was eloquent and beautiful at that moment; nay, "coquettish," if the word were not too heavy. By justifying herself, by raising insurmountable barriers between herself and love, she was stimulating every sentiment in the man before her; nay, more, the higher she set the goal, the more conspicuous it grew. At last, when her eyes had lost the too eloquent expression given to them by painful memories, she let them fall on Gaston.

"You acknowledge, do you not, that I am bound to lead a solitary, self-contained life?" she said quietly.

So sublime was she in her reasoning and her madness, that M. de Nueil felt a wild longing to throw himself at her feet; but he was afraid of making himself ridiculous, so he held his enthusiasm and his thoughts in check. He was afraid, too, that he might totally fail to express them, and in no less terror of some awful rejection on her part, or of her mockery, an apprehension which strikes like ice to the most fervid soul. The revulsion which led him to crush down every feeling as it sprang up in his heart cost him the intense pain that diffident and ambitious natures experience in the frequent crises when they are compelled to stifle their long-

ings. And yet, in spite of himself, he broke the silence to say in a faltering voice:

"Madame, permit me to give way to one of the strongest emotions of my life, and own to all that you have made me feel. You set the heart in me swelling high! I feel within me a longing to make you forget your mortifications, to devote my life to this, to give you love for all who ever have given you wounds or hate. But this is a very sudden outpouring of the heart, nothing can justify it to-day, and I ought not——"

"Enough, monsieur," said Mme. de Beauséant; "we have both of us gone too far. By giving you the sad reasons for a refusal which I am compelled to give, I meant to soften it and not to elicit homage. Coquetry only suits a happy woman. Believe me, we must remain strangers to each other. At a later day you will know that ties which must inevitably be broken ought not to be formed at all."

She sighed lightly, and her brows contracted, but almost immediately grew clear again.

"How painful it is for a woman to be powerless to follow the man she loves through all the phases of his life! And if that man loves her truly, his heart must surely vibrate with pain to the deep trouble in hers. Are they not twice unhappy?"

There was a short pause. Then she rose smiling.

"You little suspected, when you came to Courcelles, that you were to hear a sermon, did you?"

Gaston felt even further than at first from this extraordinary woman. Was the charm of that delightful hour due after all to the coquetry of the mistress of the house? She had been anxious to display her wit. He bowed stiffly to the Vicomtesse, and went away in desperation.

On the way home he tried to detect the real character of a creature supple and hard as a steel spring; but he had seen her pass through so many phases, that he could not make up his mind about her. The tones of her voice, too, were ringing in his ears; her gestures, the little movements of her

head, and the varying expression of her eyes grew more gracious in memory, more fascinating as he thought of them. The Vicomtesse's beauty shone out again for him in the darkness; his reviving impressions called up yet others, and he was enthralled anew by womanly charm and wit, which at first he had not perceived. He fell to wandering musings, in which the most lucid thoughts grow refractory and flatly contradict each other, and the soul passes through a brief frenzy fit. Youth only can understand all that lies in the dithyrambic outpourings of youth when, after a stormy siege, of the most frantic folly and coolest common-sense, the heart finally yields to the assault of the latest comer, be it hope, or despair, as some mysterious power determines.

At three-and-twenty, diffidence nearly always rules a man's conduct; he is perplexed with a young girl's shyness, a girl's trouble; he is afraid lest he should express his love ill, sees nothing but difficulties, and takes alarm at them; he would be bolder if he loved less, for he has no confidence in himself, and with a growing sense of the cost of happiness comes a conviction that the woman he loves cannot easily be won; perhaps, too, he is giving himself up too entirely to his own pleasure, and fears that he can give none; and when, for his misfortune, his idol inspires him with awe, he worships in secret and afar, and unless his love is guessed, it dies away. Then it often happens that one of these dead early loves lingers on, bright with illusions in many a young heart. What man is there but keeps within him these virgin memories that grow fairer every time they rise before him, memories that hold up to him the ideal of perfect bliss? Such recollections are like children who die in the flower of childhood, before their parents have known anything of them but their smiles.

So M. de Nueil came home from Courcelles, the victim of a mood fraught with desperate resolutions. Even now he felt that Mme. de Beauséant was one of the conditions of his existence, and that death would be preferable to life without her. He was still young enough to feel the tyrannous fascination which fully-developed womanhood exerts over imma-

ture and impassioned natures; and, consequently, he was to spend one of those stormy nights when a young man's thoughts travel from happiness to suicide and back again—nights in which youth rushes through a lifetime of bliss and falls asleep from sheer exhaustion. Fateful nights are they, and the worst misfortune that can happen is to awake a philosopher afterwards. M. de Nueil was far too deeply in love to sleep; he rose and betook to inditing letters, but none of them were satisfactory, and he burned them all.

The next day he went to Courcelles to make the circuit of her garden walls, but he waited till nightfall; he was afraid that she might see him. The instinct that led him to act in this way arose out of so obscure a mood of the soul, that none but a young man, or a man in like case, can fully understand its mute ecstasies and its vagaries, matter to set those people who are lucky enough to see life only in its matter-of-fact aspect shrugging their shoulders. After painful hesitation, Gaston wrote to Mme. de Beauséant. Here is the letter, which may serve as a sample of the epistolary style peculiar to lovers, a performance which, like the drawings prepared with great secrecy by children for the birthdays of father or mother, is found insufferable by every mortal except the recipients:—

"Madame,—Your power over my heart, my soul, myself, is so great that my fate depends wholly upon you to-day. Do not throw this letter into the fire; be so kind as to read it through. Perhaps you may pardon the opening sentence when you see that it is no commonplace, selfish declaration, but that it expresses a simple fact. Perhaps you may feel moved, because I ask for so little, by the submission of one who feels himself so much beneath you, by the influence that your decision will exercise upon my life. At my age, madame, I only know how to love, I am utterly ignorant of ways of attracting and winning a woman's love, but in my own heart I know raptures of adoration of her. I am irresistibly drawn to you by the great happiness that I feel through you;

my thoughts turn to you with the selfish instinct which bids us draw nearer to the fire of life when we find it. I do not imagine that I am worthy of you; it seems impossible that I, young, ignorant, and shy, could bring you one-thousandth part of the happiness that I drink in at the sound of your voice and the sight of you. For me you are the only woman in the world. I cannot imagine life without you, so I have made up my mind to leave France, and to risk my life till I lose it in some desperate enterprise, in the Indies, in Africa, I care not where. How can I quell a love that knows no limits save by opposing to it something as infinite? Yet, if you will allow me to hope, not to be yours, but to win your friendship, I will stay. Let me come, not so very often, if you require it, to spend a few such hours with you as those stolen hours of yesterday. The keen delight of that brief happiness, to be cut short at the least over-ardent word from me, will suffice to enable me to endure the boiling torrent in my veins. Have I presumed too much upon your generosity by this entreaty to suffer an intercourse in which all the gain is mine alone? You could find ways of showing the world, to which you sacrifice so much, that I am nothing to you; you are so clever and so proud! What have you to fear? If I could only lay bare my heart to you at this moment, to convince you that it is with no lurking afterthought that I make this humble request! Should I have told you that my love was boundless, while I prayed you to grant me friendship, if I had any hope of your sharing this feeling in the depths of my soul? No, while I am with you, I will be whatever you will, if only I may be with you. If you refuse (as you have the power to refuse), I will not utter one murmur, I will go. And if, at a later day, any other woman should enter into my life, you will have proof that you were right; but if I am faithful till death, you may feel some regret perhaps. The hope of causing you a regret will soothe my agony, and that thought shall be the sole revenge of a slighted heart. . . ."

Only those who have passed through all the exceeding trib-

ulations of youth, who have seized on all the chimeras with two white pinions, the nightmare fancies at the disposal of a fervid imagination, can realize the horrors that seized upon Gaston de Nueil when he had reason to suppose that his ultimatum was in Mme. de Beauséant's hands. He saw the Vicomtesse, wholly untouched, laughing at his letter and his love, as those can laugh who have ceased to believe in love. He could have wished to have his letter back again. It was an absurd letter. There were a thousand and one things, now that he came to think of it, that he might have said, things infinitely better and more moving than those stilted phrases of his, those accursed, sophisticated, pretentious, fine-spun phrases, though, luckily, the punctuation had been pretty bad, and the lines shockingly crooked. He tried not to think, not to feel; but he felt and thought, and was wretched. If he had been thirty years old, he might have got drunk, but the innocence of three-and-twenty knew nothing of the resources of opium nor of the expedients of advanced civilization. Nor had he at hand one of those good friends of the Parisian pattern who understand so well how to say *Pæte, non dolet!* by producing a bottle of champagne, or alleviate the agony of suspense by carrying you off somewhere to make a night of it. Capital fellows are they, always in low water when you are in funds, always off to some watering-place when you go to look them up, always with some bad bargain in horse-flesh to sell you; it is true, that when you want to borrow of them, they have always just lost their last louis at play; but in all other respects they are the best fellows on earth, always ready to embark with you on one of the steep down-grades where you lose your time, your soul, and your life!

At length M. de Nueil received a missive through the instrumentality of Jacques, a letter that bore the arms of Burgundy on the scented seal, a letter written on vellum notepaper.

He rushed away at once to lock himself in, and read and re-read *her* letter:—

"You are punishing me very severely, monsieur, both for the friendliness of my effort to spare you a rebuff, and for the attraction which intellect always has for me. I put confidence in the generosity of youth, and you have disappointed me. And yet, if I did not speak unreservedly (which would have been perfectly ridiculous), at any rate I spoke frankly of my position, so that you might imagine that I was not to be touched by a young soul. My distress is the keener for my interest in you. I am naturally tender-hearted and kindly, but circumstances force me to act unkindly. Another woman would have flung your letter, unread, into the fire; I read it, and I am answering it. My answer will make it clear to you that while I am not untouched by the expression of this feeling which I have inspired, albeit unconsciously, I am still far from sharing it, and the step which I am about to take will show you still more plainly that I mean what I say. I wish besides, to use, for your welfare, that authority, as it were, which you give me over your life; and I desire to exercise it this once to draw aside the veil from your eyes.

"I am nearly thirty years old, monsieur; you are barely two-and-twenty. You yourself cannot know what your thoughts will be at my age. The vows that you make so lightly to-day may seem a very heavy burden to you then. I am quite willing to believe that at this moment you would give me your whole life without a regret, you would even be ready to die for a little brief happiness; but at the age of thirty experience will take from you the very power of making daily sacrifices for my sake, and I myself should feel deeply humiliated if I accepted them. A day would come when everything, even Nature, would bid you leave me, and I have already told you that death is preferable to desertion. Misfortune has taught me to calculate; as you see, I am arguing perfectly dispassionately. You force me to tell you that I have no love for you; I ought not to love, I cannot, and I will not. It is too late to yield, as women yield, to a blind unreasoning impulse of the heart, too late to be the mistress whom you seek. My consolations spring from God, not from earth.

Ah, and besides, with the melancholy insight of disappointed love, I read hearts too clearly to accept your proffered friendship. It is only instinct. I forgive the boyish ruse, for which you are not responsible as yet. In the name of this passing fancy of yours, for the sake of your career and my own peace of mind, I bid you stay in your own country; you must not spoil a fair and honorable life for an illusion which, by its very nature, cannot last. At a later day, when you have accomplished your real destiny, in the fully developed manhood that awaits you, you will appreciate this answer of mine, though to-day it may be that you blame its hardness. You will turn with pleasure to an old woman whose friendship will certainly be sweet and precious to you then; a friendship untried by the extremes of passion and the disenchanting processes of life; a friendship which noble thoughts and thoughts of religion will keep pure and sacred. Farewell; do my bidding with the thought that your success will bring a gleam of pleasure into my solitude, and only think of me as we think of absent friends."

Gaston de Nueil read the letter, and wrote the following lines:—

"MADAME,—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own——"

When the man returned from his errand, M. de Nueil asked him with whom he left the note?

"I gave it to Mme. la Vicomtesse herself, sir; she was in her carriage and just about to start."

"For the town?"

"I don't think so, sir. Mme. la Vicomtesse had post-horses."

"Ah! then she is going away," said the Baron.

"Yes, sir," the man answered.

Gaston de Nueil at once prepared to follow Mme. de Beauséant. She led the way as far as Geneva, without a suspicion that he followed. And he? Amid the many thoughts that assailed him during that journey, one all-absorbing problem filled his mind—"Why did she go away?" Theories grew thickly on such ground for supposition, and naturally he inclined to the one that flattered his hopes—"If the Vicomtesse cares for me, a clever woman would, of course, choose Switzerland, where nobody knows either of us, in preference to France, where she would find censorious critics."

An impassioned lover of a certain stamp would not feel attracted to a woman clever enough to choose her own ground; such women are too clever. However, there is nothing to prove that there was any truth in Gaston's supposition.

The Vicomtesse took a small house by the side of the lake. As soon as she was installed in it, Gaston came one summer evening in the twilight. Jacques, that flunkey in grain, showed no sign of surprise, and announced *M. le Baron de Nueil* like a discreet domestic well acquainted with good society. At the sound of the name, at the sight of its owner, Mme. de Beauséant let her book fall from her hands; her surprise gave him time to come close to her, and to say in tones that sounded like music in her ears:

"What joy it was to me to take the horses that brought you on this journey!"

To have the inmost desires of the heart so fulfilled! Where is the woman who could resist such happiness as this? An Italian woman, one of those divine creatures who, psychologically, are as far removed from the Parisian as if they lived at the Antipodes, a being who would be regarded as profoundly immoral on this side the Alps, an Italian (to resume) made the following comment on some French novels which she had been reading. "I cannot see," she remarked, "why these poor lovers take such a time over coming to an

arrangement which ought to be the affair of a single morning." Why should not the novelist take a hint from this worthy lady, and refrain from exhausting the theme and the reader? Some few passages of coquetry it would certainly be pleasant to give in outline; the story of Mme. de Beauséant's demurs and sweet delayings, that, like the vestal virgins of antiquity, she might fall gracefully, and by lingering over the innocent raptures of first love draw from it its utmost strength and sweetness. M. de Nueil was at an age when a man is the dupe of these caprices, of the fence which women delight to prolong; either to dictate their own terms, or to enjoy the sense of their power yet longer, knowing instinctively as they do that it must soon grow less. But, after all, these little boudoir protocols, less numerous than those of the Congress of London, are too small to be worth mention in the history of this passion.

For three years Mme. de Beauséant and M. de Nueil lived in the villa on the lake of Geneva. They lived quite alone, received no visitors, caused no talk, rose late, went out together upon the lake, knew, in short, the happiness of which we all of us dream. It was a simple little house, with green shutters, and broad balconies shaded with awnings, a house contrived of set purpose for lovers, with its white couches, soundless carpets, and fresh hangings, everything within it reflecting their joy. Every window looked out on some new view of the lake; in the far distance lay the mountains, fantastic visions of changing color and evanescent cloud; above them spread the sunny sky, before them stretched the broad sheet of water, never the same in its fitful changes. All their surroundings seemed to dream for them, all things smiled upon them.

Then weighty matters recalled M. de Nueil to France. His father and brother died, and he was obliged to leave Geneva. The lovers bought the house; and if they could have had their way, they would have removed the hills piecemeal, drawn off the lake with a siphon, and taken everything away with them.

Mme. de Beauséant followed M. de Nueil. She realized her property, and bought a considerable estate near Manerville, adjoining Gaston's lands, and here they lived together; Gaston very graciously giving up Manerville to his mother for the present in consideration of the bachelor freedom in which she left him.

Mme. de Beauséant's estate was close to a little town in one of the most picturesque spots in the valley of the Auge. Here the lovers raised barriers between themselves and social intercourse, barriers which no creature could overleap, and here the happy days of Switzerland were lived over again. For nine whole years they knew happiness which it serves no purpose to describe; happiness which may be divined from the outcome of the story by those whose souls can comprehend poetry and prayer in their infinite manifestations.

All this time Mme. de Beauséant's husband, the present Marquis (his father and elder brother having died), enjoyed the soundest health. There is no better aid to life than a certain knowledge that our demise would confer a benefit on some fellow-creature. M. de Beauséant was one of those ironical and wayward beings who, like holders of life-annuities, wake with an additional sense of relish every morning to a consciousness of good health. For the rest, he was a man of the world, somewhat methodical and ceremonious, and a calculator of consequences, who could make a declaration of love as quietly as a lackey announces that "Madame is served."

This brief biographical notice of his lordship the Marquis de Beauséant is given to explain the reasons why it was impossible for the Marquise to marry M. de Nueil.

So, after a nine years' lease of happiness, the sweetest agreement to which a woman ever put her hand, M. de Nueil and Mme. de Beauséant were still in a position quite as natural and quite as false as at the beginning of their adventure. And yet they had reached a fatal crisis, which may be stated as clearly as any problem in mathematics.

Mme. la Comtesse de Nueil, Gaston's mother, a strait-laced and virtuous person, who had made the late Baron happy in

strictly legal fashion, would never consent to meet Mme. de Beauséant. Mme. de Beauséant quite understood that the worthy dowager must of necessity be her enemy, and that she would try to draw Gaston from his unhallowed and immoral way of life. The Marquise de Beauséant would willingly have sold her property and gone back to Geneva, but she could not bring herself to do it; it would mean that she distrusted M. de Nueil. Moreover, he had taken a great fancy to this very Valleroy estate, where he was making plantations and improvements. She would not deprive him of a piece of pleasurable routine-work, such as women always wish for their husbands, and even for their lovers.

A Mlle. de la Rodière, twenty-two years of age, an heiress with a rent-roll of forty thousand livres, had come to live in the neighborhood. Gaston always met her at Manerville whenever he was obliged to go thither. These various personages being to each other as the terms of a proportion sum, the following letter will throw light on the appalling problem which Mme. de Beauséant had been trying for the past month to solve:—

"My beloved angel, it seems like nonsense, does it not, to write to you when there is nothing to keep us apart, when a caress so often takes the place of words, and words too are caresses? Ah, well, no, love. There are some things that a woman cannot say when she is face to face with the man she loves; at the bare thought of them her voice fails her, and the blood goes back to her heart; she has no strength, no intelligence left. It hurts me to feel like this when you are near me, and it happens often. I feel that my heart should be wholly sincere for you; that I should disguise no thought, however transient, in my heart; and I love the sweet carelessness, which suits me so well, too much to endure this embarrassment and constraint any longer. So I will tell you about my anguish—yes, it is anguish. Listen to me! do not begin with the little 'Tut, tut, tut,' that you use to silence me, an impertinence that I love, because anything from you

pleases me. Dear soul from heaven, wedded to mine, let me first tell you that you have effaced all memory of the pain that once was crushing the life out of me. I did not know what love was before I knew you. Only the candor of your beautiful young life, only the purity of that great soul of yours, could satisfy the requirements of an exacting woman's heart. Dear love, how very often I have thrilled with joy to think that in these nine long, swift years, my jealousy has not been once awakened. All the flowers of your soul have been mine, all your thoughts. There has not been the faintest cloud in our heaven; we have not known what sacrifice is; we have always acted on the impulses of our hearts. I have known happiness, infinite for a woman. Will the tears that drench this sheet tell you all my gratitude? I could wish that I had knelt to write the words!—Well, out of this felicity has arisen torture more terrible than the pain of desertion. Dear, there are very deep recesses in a woman's heart; how deep in my own heart, I did not know myself until to-day, as I did not know the whole extent of love. The greatest misery which could overwhelm us is a light burden compared with the mere thought of harm for him whom we love. And how if we cause the harm, is it not enough to make one die? . . . This is the thought that is weighing upon me. But it brings in its train another thought that is heavier far, a thought that tarnishes the glory of love, and slays it, and turns it into a humiliation which sullies life as long as it lasts. You are thirty years old; I am forty. What dread this difference in age calls up in a woman who loves! It is possible that, first of all unconsciously, afterwards in earnest, you have felt the sacrifices that you have made by renouncing all in the world for me. Perhaps you have thought of your future from the social point of view, of the marriage which would, of course, increase your fortune, and give you avowed happiness and children who would inherit your wealth; perhaps you have thought of reappearing in the world, and filling your place there honorably. And then, if so, you must have repressed those thoughts, and felt glad

to sacrifice heiress and fortune and a fair future to me without my knowledge. In your young man's generosity, you must have resolved to be faithful to the vows which bind us each to each in the sight of God. My past pain has risen up before your mind, and the misery from which you rescued me has been my protection. To owe your love to your pity! The thought is even more painful to me than the fear of spoiling your life for you. The man who can bring himself to stab his mistress is very charitable if he gives her her deathblow while she is happy and ignorant of evil, while illusions are in full blossom. . . . Yes, death is preferable to the two thoughts which have secretly saddened the hours for several days. To-day, when you asked 'What ails you?' so tenderly, the sound of your voice made me shiver. I thought that, after your wont, you were reading my very soul, and I waited for your confidence to come, thinking that my presentiments had come true, and that I had guessed at all that was going on in your mind. Then I began to think over certain little things that you always do for me, and I thought I could see in you the sort of affectation by which a man betrays a consciousness that his loyalty is becoming a burden. And in that moment I paid very dear for my happiness. I felt that Nature always demands the price for the treasure called love. Briefly, has not fate separated us? Can you have said, 'Sooner or later I must leave poor Claire; why not separate in time?' I read that thought in the depths of your eyes, and went away to cry by myself. Hiding my tears from you! the first tears that I have shed for sorrow for these ten years; I am too proud to let you see them, but I did not reproach you in the least.

"Yes, you are right. I ought not to be so selfish as to bind your long and brilliant career to my so-soon out-worn life. . . . And yet—how if I have been mistaken? How if I have taken your love melancholy for a deliberation? Oh, my love, do not leave me in suspense; punish this jealous wife of yours, but give her back the sense of her love and yours; the whole woman lies in that—that consciousness sanctifies everything.

"Since your mother came, since you paid a visit to Mlle. de Rodière, I have been gnawed by doubts dishonoring to us both. Make me suffer for this, but do not deceive me; I want to know everything that your mother said and that you think! If you have hesitated between some alternative and me, I give you back your liberty. . . . I will not let you know what happens to me; I will not shed tears for you to see; only—I will not see you again. . . . Ah! I cannot go on, my heart is breaking . . .

. . . .

I have been sitting benumbed and stupid for some moments. Dear love, I do not find that any feeling of pride rises against you; you are so kind-hearted, so open; you would find it impossible to hurt me or to deceive me; and you will tell me the truth, however cruel it may be. Do you wish me to encourage your confession? Well, then, heart of mine, I shall find comfort in a woman's thought. Has not the youth of your being been mine, your sensitive, wholly gracious, beautiful, and delicate youth? No woman shall find henceforth the Gaston whom I have known, nor the delicious happiness that he has given me. . . . No; you will never love again as you have loved, as you love me now; no, I shall never have a rival, it is impossible. There will be no bitterness in my memories of our love, and I shall think of nothing else. It is out of your power to enchant any woman henceforth by the childish provocations, the charming ways of a young heart, the soul's winning charm, the body's grace, the swift communion of rapture, the whole divine cortège of young love, in fine.

"Oh, you are a man now, you will obey your destiny, weighing and considering all things. You will have cares, and anxieties, and ambitions, and concerns that will rob *her* of the unchanging smile that made your lips fair for me. The tones that were always so sweet for me will be troubled at times; and your eyes that lighted up with radiance from heaven at the sight of me, will often be lustreless for *her*. And besides, as it is impossible to love you as I love you,

you will never care for that woman as you have cared for me. She will never keep a constant watch over herself as I have done; she will never study your happiness at every moment with an intuition which has never failed me. Ah, yes, the man, the heart and soul, which I shall have known will exist no longer. I shall bury him deep in my memory, that I may have the joy of him still; I shall live happy in that fair past life of ours, a life hidden from all but our inmost selves.

"Dear treasure of mine, if all the while no least thought of liberty has risen in your mind, if my love is no burden on you, if my fears are chimerical, if I am still your Eve—the one woman in the world for you—come to me as soon as you have read this letter, come quickly! Ah, in one moment I will love you more than I have ever loved you, I think, in these nine years. After enduring the needless torture of these doubts of which I am accusing myself, every added day of love, yes, every single day, will be a whole lifetime of bliss. So speak, and speak openly; do not deceive me, it would be a crime. Tell me, do you wish for your liberty? Have you thought of all that a man's life means? Is there any regret in your mind? That *I* should cause you a regret! I should die of it. I have said it: I love you enough to set your happiness above mine, your life before my own. Leave on one side, if you can, the wealth of memories of our nine years' happiness, that they may not influence your decision, but speak! I submit myself to you as to God, the one Consoler who remains if you forsake me."

When Mme. de Beauséant knew that her letter was in M. de Nueil's hands, she sank in such utter prostration, the over-pressure of many thoughts so numbed her faculties, that she seemed almost drowsy. At any rate, she was suffering from a pain not always proportioned in its intensity to a woman's strength; pain which women alone know. And while the unhappy Marquise awaited her doom, M. de Nueil, reading her letter, felt that he was "in a very difficult position," to

use the expression that young men apply to a crisis of this kind.

By this time he had all but yielded to his mother's importunities and to the attractions of Mlle. de la Rodière, a somewhat insignificant, pink-and-white young person, as straight as a poplar. It is true that, in accordance with the rules laid down for marriageable young ladies, she scarcely opened her mouth, but her rent-roll of forty thousand livres spoke quite sufficiently for her. Mme. de Nueil, with a mother's sincere affection, tried to entangle her son in virtuous courses. She called his attention to the fact that it was a flattering distinction to be preferred by Mlle. de la Rodière, who had refused so many great matches; it was quite time, she urged, that he should think of his future, such a good opportunity might not repeat itself, some day he would have eighty thousand livres of income from land; money made anything bearable; if Mme. de Beauséant loved him for his own sake, she ought to be the first to urge him to marry. In short, the well-intentioned mother forgot no arguments which the feminine intellect can bring to bear upon the masculine mind, and by these means she had brought her son into a wavering condition.

Mme. de Beauséant's letter arrived just as Gaston's love of her was holding out against the temptations of a settled life conformable to received ideas. That letter decided the day. He made up his mind to break off with the Marquise and to marry.

"One must live a man's life," said he to himself.

Then followed some inkling of the pain that this decision would give to Mme. de Beauséant. The man's vanity and the lover's conscience further exaggerated this pain, and a sincere pity for her seized upon him. All at once the immensity of the misery became apparent to him, and he thought it necessary and charitable to deaden the deadly blow. He hoped to bring Mme. de Beauséant to a calm frame of mind by gradually reconciling her to the idea of separation; while Mlle. de la Rodière, always like a shadowy

third between them, should be sacrificed to her at first, only to be imposed upon her later. His marriage should take place later, in obedience to Mme. de Beauséant's expressed wish. He went so far as to enlist the Marquise's nobleness and pride and all the great qualities of her nature to help him to succeed in this compassionate design. He would write a letter at once to allay her suspicions. *A letter!* For a woman with the most exquisite feminine perception, as well as the intuition of passionate love, a letter in itself was a sentence of death.

So when Jacques came and brought Mme. de Beauséant a sheet of paper folded in a triangle, she trembled, poor woman, like a snared swallow. A mysterious sensation of physical cold spread from head to foot, wrapping her about in an icy winding sheet. If he did not rush to her feet, if he did not come to her in tears, and pale, and like a lover, she knew that all was lost. And yet, so many hopes are there in the heart of a woman who loves, that she is only slain by stab after stab, and loves on till the last drop of life-blood drains away.

"Does madame need anything?" Jacques asked gently, as he went away.

"No," she said.

"Poor fellow!" she thought, brushing a tear from her eyes, "he guesses my feelings, servant though he is!"

She read: "My beloved, you are inventing idle terrors for yourself . . ." The Marquise gazed at the words, and a thick mist spread before her eyes. A voice in her heart cried, "He lies!"—Then she glanced down the page with the clairvoyant eagerness of passion, and read these words at the foot, "*Nothing has been decided as yet . . .*" Turning to the other side with convulsive quickness, she saw the mind of the writer distinctly through the intricacies of the wording; this was no spontaneous outburst of love. She crushed it in her fingers, twisted it, tore it with her teeth, flung it in the fire, and cried aloud, "Ah! base that he is! I was his, and he had ceased to love me!"

She sank half dead upon the couch.

M. de Nueil went out as soon as he had written his letter. When he came back, Jacques met him on the threshold with a note. "Madame la Marquise has left the château," said the man.

M. de Nueil, in amazement, broke the seal and read:—

"MADAME,—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own . . ."

It was his own letter, written to the Marquise as she set out for Geneva nine years before. At the foot of it Claire de Bourgogne had written, "Monsieur, you are free."

M. de Nueil went to his mother at Manerville. In less than three weeks he married Mlle. Stéphanie de la Rodière.

If this commonplace story of real life ended here, it would be to some extent a sort of mystification. The first man you meet can tell you a better. But the widespread fame of the catastrophe (for, unhappily, this is a true tale), and all the memories which it may arouse in those who have known the divine delights of infinite passion, and lost them by their own deed, or through the cruelty of fate,—these things may perhaps shelter the story from criticism.

Mme. la Marquise de Beauséant never left Valleroy after her parting from M. de Nueil. After his marriage she still continued to live there, for some inscrutable woman's reason; any woman is at liberty to assign the one which most appeals to her. Claire de Bourgogne lived in such complete retirement that none of the servants, save Jacques and her own woman, ever saw their mistress. She required absolute si-

lence all about her, and only left her room to go to the chapel on the Valleroy estate, whither a neighboring priest came to say mass every morning.

The Comte de Nueil sank a few days after his marriage into something like conjugal apathy, which might be interpreted to mean happiness or unhappiness equally easily.

"My son is perfectly happy," his mother said everywhere.

Mme. Gaston de Nueil, like a great many young women, was a rather colorless character, sweet and passive. A month after her marriage she had expectations of becoming a mother. All this was quite in accordance with ordinary views. M. de Nueil was very nice to her; but two months after his separation from the Marquise, he grew notably thoughtful and abstracted. But then he always had been serious, his mother said.

After seven months of this tepid happiness, a little thing occurred, one of those seemingly small matters which imply such great development of thought and such widespread trouble of soul, that only the bare fact can be recorded; the interpretation of it must be left to the fancy of each individual mind. One day, when M. de Nueil had been shooting over the lands of Manerville and Valleroy, he crossed Mme. de Beauséant's park on his way home, summoned Jacques, and when the man came, asked him, "Whether the Marquise was as fond of game as ever?"

Jacques answering in the affirmative, Gaston offered him a good round sum (accompanied by plenty of specious reasoning) for a very little service. Would he set aside for the Marquise the game that the Count would bring? It seemed to Jacques to be a matter of no great importance whether the partridge on which his mistress dined had been shot by her keeper or by M. de Nueil, especially since the latter particularly wished that the Marquise should know nothing about it.

"It was killed on her land," said the Count, and for some days Jacques lent himself to the harmless deceit. Day after day M. de Nueil went shooting, and came back at dinner-

time with an empty bag. A whole week went by in this way. Gaston grew bold enough to write a long letter to the Marquise, and had it conveyed to her. It was returned to him unopened. The Marquise's servant brought it back about nightfall. The Count, sitting in the drawing-room listening, while his wife at the piano mangled a *Caprice* of Hérold's, suddenly sprang up and rushed out to the Marquise, as if he were flying to an assignation. He dashed through a well-known gap into the park, and went slowly along the avenues, stopping now and again for a little to still the loud beating of his heart. Smothered sounds as he came nearer the château told him that the servants must be at supper, and he went straight to Mme. de Beauséant's room.

Mme. de Beauséant never left her bedroom. M. de Nueil could gain the doorway without making the slightest sound. There, by the light of two wax candles, he saw the thin, white Marquise in a great armchair; her head was bowed, her hands hung listlessly, her eyes gazing fixedly at some object which she did not seem to see. Her whole attitude spoke of hopeless pain. There was a vague something like hope in her bearing, but it was impossible to say whither Claire de Bourgogne was looking—forwards to the tomb or backwards into the past. Perhaps M. de Nueil's tears glittered in the deep shadows; perhaps his breathing sounded faintly; perhaps unconsciously he trembled, or again it may have been impossible that he should stand there, his presence unfelt by that quick sense which grows to be an instinct, the glory, the delight, the proof of perfect love. However it was, Mme. de Beauséant slowly turned her face towards the doorway, and beheld her lover of bygone days. Then Gaston de Nueil came forward a few paces.

"If you come any further, sir," exclaimed the Marquise, growing paler, "I shall fling myself out of the window!"

She sprang to the window, flung it open, and stood with one foot on the ledge, her hand upon the iron balustrade, her face turned towards Gaston.

"Go out! go out!" she cried, "or I will throw myself over."

At that dreadful cry the servants began to stir, and M. de Nueil fled like a criminal.

When he reached his home again he wrote a few lines and gave them to his own man, telling him to give the letter himself into Mme. de Beauséant's hands, and to say that it was a matter of life and death for his master. The messenger went. M. de Nueil went back to the drawing-room where his wife was still murdering the *Caprice,* and sat down to wait till the answer came. An hour later, when the *Caprice* had come to an end, and the husband and wife sat in silence on opposite sides of the hearth, the man came back from Valleroy and gave his master his own letter, unopened.

M. de Nueil went into a small room beyond the drawing-room, where he had left his rifle, and shot himself.

The swift and fatal ending of the drama, contrary as it is to all the habits of young France, is only what might have been expected. Those who have closely observed, or known for themselves by delicious experience, all that is meant by the perfect union of two beings, will understand Gaston de Nueil's suicide perfectly well. A woman does not bend and form herself in a day to the caprices of passion. The pleasure of loving, like some rare flower, needs the most careful ingenuity of culture. Time alone, and two souls attuned each to each, can discover all its resources, and call into being all the tender and delicate delights for which we are steeped in a thousand superstitions, imagining them to be inherent in the heart that lavishes them upon us. It is this wonderful response of one nature to another, this religious belief, this certainty of finding peculiar or excessive happiness in the presence of one we love, that accounts in part for perdurable attachments and long-lived passion. If a woman possesses the genius of her sex, love never comes to be a matter of use and wont. She brings all her heart and brain to love, clothes her tenderness in forms so varied, there is such art in her most natural moments, or so much nature in her art, that in absence her memory is almost as potent as

her presence. All other women are as shadows compared with her. Not until we have lost or known the dread of losing a love so vast and glorious, do we prize it at its just worth. And if a man who has once possessed this love shuts himself out from it by his own act and deed, and sinks to some loveless marriage; if by some incident, hidden in the obscurity of married life, the woman with whom he hoped to know the same felicity makes it clear that it will never be revived for him; if, with the sweetness of divine love still on his lips, he has dealt a deadly wound to *her,* his wife in truth, whom he forsook for a social chimera,—then he must either die or take refuge in a materialistic, selfish, and heartless philosophy, from which impassioned souls shrink in horror.

As for Mme. de Beauséant, she doubtless did not imagine that her friend's despair could drive him to suicide, when he had drunk deep of love for nine years. Possibly she may have thought that she alone was to suffer. At any rate, she did quite rightly to refuse the most humiliating of all positions; a wife may stoop for weighty social reasons to a kind of compromise which a mistress is bound to hold in abhorrence, for in the purity of her passion lies all its justification.

ANGOULÊME, *September* 1832.

LA GRENADIÈRE

To D. W.

La Grenadière is a little house on the right bank of the Loire as you go down stream, about a mile below the bridge of Tours. At this point the river, broad as a lake, and covered with scattered green islands, flows between two lines of cliff, where country houses built uniformly of white stone stand among their gardens and vineyards. The finest fruit in the world ripens there with a southern exposure. The patient toil of many generations has cut terraces in the cliff, so that the face of the rock reflects the rays of the sun, and the produce of hot climates may be grown out of doors in an artificially high temperature.

A church spire, rising out of one of the shallower dips in the line of cliff, marks the little village of Saint-Cyr, to which the scattered houses all belong. And yet a little further the Choisille flows into the Loire, through a fertile valley cut in the long low downs.

La Grenadière itself, half-way up the hillside, and about a hundred paces from the church, is one of those old-fashioned houses dating back some two or three hundred years, which you find in every picturesque spot in Touraine. A fissure in the rock affords convenient space for a flight of steps descending gradually to the "dike"—the local name for the embankment made at the foot of the cliffs to keep the Loire in its bed, and serve as a causeway for the highroad from Paris to Nantes. At the top of the steps a gate opens upon a narrow stony footpath between two terraces, for here the soil is banked up, and walls are built to prevent landslips. These earthworks, as it were, are crowned with trellises and

espaliers, so that the steep path that lies at the foot of the upper wall is almost hidden by the trees that grow on the top of the lower, upon which it lies. The view of the river widens out before you at every step as you climb to the house.

At the end you come to a second gateway, a Gothic archway covered with simple ornament, now crumbling into ruin and overgrown with wildflowers—moss and ivy, wallflowers and pellitory. Every stone wall on the hillside is decked with this ineradicable plant-life, which springs up along the cracks between the courses of masonry, tracing out the lines afresh with new wreaths for every time of year.

The worm-eaten gate gives into a little garden, a strip of turf, a few trees, and a wilderness of flowers and rose bushes —a garden won from the rock on the highest terrace of all, with the dark, old balustrade along its edge. Opposite the gateway, a wooden summer-house stands against the neighboring wall, the posts are covered with jessamine and honeysuckle, vines and clematis.

The house itself stands in the middle of this highest garden, above a vine-covered flight of steps, with an arched doorway beneath that leads to vast cellars hollowed out in the rock. All about the dwelling trellised vines and pomegranate-trees (the *grenadiers,* which give the name to the little close) are growing out in the open air. The front of the house consists of two large windows on either side of a very rustic-looking house door, and three dormer windows in the roof—a slate roof with two gables, prodigiously high-pitched in proportion to the low ground-floor. The house walls are washed with yellow color; and door, and first-floor shutters, and the Venetian shutters of the attic windows, all are painted green.

Entering the house, you find yourself in a little lobby with a crooked staircase straight in front of you. It is a crazy wooden structure, the spiral balusters are brown with age, and the steps themselves take a new angle at every turn. The great old-fashioned paneled dining-room, floored with square white tiles from Château-Regnault, is on your right; to the

left is the sitting-room, equally large, but here the walls are not paneled; they have been covered instead with a saffron-colored paper, bordered with green. The walnut-wood rafters are left visible, and the intervening spaces filled with a kind of white plaster.

The first story consists of two large whitewashed bedrooms with stone chimney-pieces, less elaborately carved than those in the rooms beneath. Every door and window is on the south side of the house, save a single door to the north, contrived behind the staircase to give access to the vineyard. Against the western wall stands a supplementary timber-framed structure, all the woodwork exposed to the weather being fledged with slates, so that the walls are checkered with bluish lines. This shed (for it is little more) is the kitchen of the establishment. You can pass from it into the house without going outside; but, nevertheless, it boasts an entrance door of its own, and a short flight of steps that brings you to a deep well, and a very rustical-looking pump, half hidden by water-plants and savin bushes and tall grasses. The kitchen is a modern addition, proving beyond doubt that La Grenadière was originally nothing but a simple *vendangeoir*—a vintage-house belonging to townsfolk in Tours, from which Saint-Cyr is separated by the vast riverbed of the Loire. The owners only came over for the day for a picnic, or at the vintage-time, sending provisions across in the morning, and scarcely ever spent the night there except during the grape harvest; but the English settled down on Touraine like a cloud of locusts, and La Grenadière must, of course, be completed if it was to find tenants. Luckily, however, this recent appendage is hidden from sight by the first two trees of a lime-tree avenue planted in a gully below the vineyards.

There are only two acres of vineyard at most, the ground rising at the back of the house so steeply that it is no very easy matter to scramble up among the vines. The slope, covered with green trailing shoots, ends within about five feet of the house wall in a ditch-like passage always damp and

cold and full of strong growing green things, fed by the drainage of the highly cultivated ground above, for rainy weather washes down the manure into the garden on the terrace.

A vinedresser's cottage also leans against the western gable, and is in some sort a continuation of the kitchen. Stone walls or espaliers surround the property, and all sorts of fruit-trees are planted among the vines, in short, not an inch of this precious soil is wasted. If by chance man overlooks some dry cranny in the rocks, Nature puts in a fig-tree, or sows wildflowers or strawberries in sheltered nooks among the stones.

Nowhere else in all the world will you find a human dwelling so humble and yet so imposing, so rich in fruit, and fragrant scents, and wide views of country. Here is a miniature Touraine in the heart of Touraine—all its flowers and fruits and all the characteristic beauty of the land are fully represented. Here are grapes of every district, figs and peaches and pears of every kind; melons are grown out of doors as easily as licorice plants, Spanish broom, Italian oleanders, and jessamines from the Azores. The Loire lies at your feet. You look down from the terrace upon the ever-changing river nearly two hundred feet below; and in the evening the breeze brings a fresh scent of the sea, with the fragrance of far-off flowers gathered upon its way. Some cloud wandering in space, changing its color and form at every moment as it crosses the pure blue of the sky, can alter every detail in the widespread wonderful landscape in a thousand ways, from every point of view. The eye embraces first of all the south bank of the Loire, stretching away as far as Amboise, then Tours with its suburbs and buildings, and the Plessis rising out of the fertile plain; further away, between Vouvray and Saint-Symphorien, you see a sort of crescent of gray cliff full of sunny vineyards; the only limits to your view are the low, rich hills along the Cher, a bluish line of horizon broken by many a château and the wooded masses of many a park. Out to the west you

lose yourself in the immense river, where vessels come and go, spreading their white sails to the winds which seldom fail them in the wide Loire basin. A prince might build a summer palace at La Grenadière, but certainly it will always be the home of a poet's desire, and the sweetest of retreats for two young lovers—for this vintage house, which belongs to a substantial burgess of Tours, has charms for every imagination, for the humblest and dullest as well as for the most impassioned and lofty. No one can dwell there without feeling that happiness is in the air, without a glimpse of all that is meant by a peaceful life without care or ambition. There is that in the air and the sound of the river that sets you dreaming; the sands have a language, and are joyous or dreary, golden or wan; and the owner of the vineyard may sit motionless amid perennial flowers and tempting fruit, and feel all the stir of the world about him.

If an Englishman takes the house for the summer, he is asked a thousand francs for six months, the produce of the vineyard not included. If the tenant wishes for the orchard fruit, the rent is doubled; for the vintage, it is doubled again. What can La Grenadière be worth, you wonder; La Grenadière, with its stone staircase, its beaten path and triple terrace, its two acres of vineyard, its flowering roses about the balustrades, its worn steps, well-head, rampant clematis, and cosmopolitan trees? It is idle to make a bid! La Grenadière will never be in the market; it was bought once and sold, but that was in 1690; and the owner parted with it for forty thousand francs, reluctant as any Arab of the desert to relinquish a favorite horse. Since then it has remained in the same family, its pride, its patrimonial jewel, its Regent diamond. "While you behold, you have and hold," says the bard. And from La Grenadière you behold three valleys of Touraine and the cathedral towers aloft in air like a bit of filigree work. How can one pay for such treasures? Could one ever pay for the health recovered there under the linden-trees?

In the spring of one of the brightest years of the Restora-

tion, a lady with her housekeeper and her two children (the oldest a boy thirteen years old, the youngest apparently about eight) came to Tours to look for a house. She saw La Grenadière and took it. Perhaps the distance from the town was an inducement to live there.

She made a bedroom of the drawing-room, gave the children the two rooms above, and the housekeeper slept in a closet behind the kitchen. The dining-room was sitting-room and drawing-room all in one for the little family. The house was furnished very simply but tastefully; there was nothing superfluous in it, and no trace of luxury. The walnut-wood furniture chosen by the stranger lady was perfectly plain, and the whole charm of the house consisted in its neatness and harmony with its surroundings.

It was rather difficult, therefore, to say whether the strange lady (Mme. Willemsens, as she styled herself) belonged to the upper middle or higher classes, or to an equivocal, unclassified feminine species. Her plain dress gave rise to the most contradictory suppositions, but her manners might be held to confirm those favorable to her She had not lived at Saint-Cyr, moreover, for very long before her reserve excited the curiosity of idle people, who always, and especially in the country, watch anybody or anything that promises to bring some interest into their narrow lives.

Mme. Willemsens was rather tall; she was thin and slender, but delicately shaped. She had pretty feet, more remarkable for the grace of the instep and ankle than for the more ordinary merit of slenderness; her gloved hands, too, were shapely. There were flitting patches of deep red in a pale face, which must have been fresh and softly colored once. Premature wrinkles had withered the delicately modeled forehead beneath the coronet of soft, well-set chestnut hair, invariably wound about her head in two plaits, a girlish coiffure which suited the melancholy face. There was a deceptive look of calm in the dark eyes, with the hollow, shadowy circles about them; sometimes, when she was off her guard, their expression told of secret anguish. The oval of her face

was somewhat long; but happiness and health had perhaps filled and perfected the outlines. A forced smile, full of quiet sadness, hovered continually on her pale lips; but when the children, who were always with her, looked up at their mother, or asked one of the incessant idle questions which convey so much to a mother's ears, then the smile brightened, and expressed the joys of a mother's love. Her gait was slow and dignified. Her dress never varied; evidently she had made up her mind to think no more of her toilette, and to forget a world by which she meant no doubt to be forgotten. She wore a long, black gown, confined at the waist by a watered-silk ribbon, and by way of scarf a lawn handkerchief with a broad hem, the two ends passed carelessly through her waistband. The instinct of dress showed itself in that she was daintily shod, and gray silk stockings carried out the suggestion of mourning in this unvarying costume. Lastly, she always wore a bonnet after the English fashion, always of the same shape and the same gray material, and a black veil. Her health apparently was extremely weak; she looked very ill. On fine evenings she would take her only walk, down to the bridge of Tours, bringing the two children with her to breathe the fresh, cool air along the Loire, and to watch the sunset effects on a landscape as wide as the Bay of Naples or the Lake of Geneva.

During the whole time of her stay at La Grenadière she went but twice into Tours; once to call on the headmaster of the school, to ask him to give her the names of the best masters of Latin, drawing, and mathematics; and a second time to make arrangements for the children's lessons. But her appearance on the bridge of an evening, once or twice a week, was quite enough to excite the interest of almost all the inhabitants of Tours, who make a regular promenade of the bridge. Still, in spite of a kind of spy system, by which no harm is meant, a provincial habit bred of want of occupation and the restless inquisitiveness of the principal society, nothing was known for certain of the newcomer's rank, fortune, or real condition. Only, the owner of La Grenadière told

one or two of his friends that the name under which the stranger had signed the lease (her real name, therefore, in all probability) was Augusta Willemsens, Countess of Brandon. This, of course, must be her husband's name. Events, which will be narrated in their place, confirmed this revelation; but it went no further than the little world of men of business known to the landlord.

So Madame Willemsens was a continual mystery to people of condition. Hers was no ordinary nature; her manners were simple and delightfully natural, the tones of her voice were divinely sweet,—this was all that she suffered others to discover. In her complete seclusion, her sadness, her beauty so passionately obscured, nay, almost blighted, there was so much to charm, that several young gentlemen fell in love; but the more sincere the lover, the more timid he became; and besides, the lady inspired awe, and it was a difficult matter to find enough courage to speak to her. Finally, if a few of the bolder sort wrote to her, their letters must have been burned unread. It was Mme. Willemsens' practice to throw all the letters which she received into the fire, as if she meant that the time spent in Touraine should be untroubled by any outside cares even of the slightest. She might have come to the enchanting retreat to give herself up wholly to the joy of living.

The three masters whose presence was allowed at La Grenadière spoke with something like admiring reverence of the touching picture that they saw there of the close, unclouded intimacy of the life led by this woman and the children.

The two little boys also aroused no small interest. Mothers could not see them without a feeling of envy. Both children were like Mme. Willemsens, who was, in fact, their mother. They had the transparent complexion and bright color, the clear, liquid eyes, the long lashes, the fresh outlines, the dazzling characteristics of childish beauty.

The elder, Louis-Gaston, had dark hair and fearless eyes. Everything about him spoke as plainly of robust, physical health as his broad, high brow, with its gracious curves, spoke

of energy of character. He was quick and alert in his movements, and strong of limb, without a trace of awkwardness. Nothing took him at unawares, and he seemed to think about everything that he saw.

Marie-Gaston, the other child, had hair that was almost golden, though a lock here and there had deepened to the mother's chestnut tint. Marie-Gaston was slender; he had the delicate features and the subtle grace so charming in Mme. Willemsens. He did not look strong. There was a gentle look in his gray eyes; his face was pale, there was something feminine about the child. He still wore his hair in long, wavy curls, and his mother would not have him give up embroidered collars, and little jackets fastened with frogs and spindle-shaped buttons; evidently she took a thoroughly feminine pleasure in the costume, a source of as much interest to the mother as to the child. The elder boy's plain white collar, turned down over a closely fitting jacket, made a contrast with his brother's clothing, but the color and material were the same; the two brothers were otherwise dressed alike, and looked alike.

No one could see them without feeling touched by the way in which Louis took care of Marie. There was an almost fatherly look in the older boy's eyes; and Marie, child though he was, seemed to be full of gratitude to Louis. They were like two buds, scarcely separated from the stem that bore them, swayed by the same breeze, lying in the same ray of sunlight; but the one was a brightly colored flower, the other somewhat bleached and pale. At a glance, a word, an inflection in their mother's voice, they grew heedful, turned to look at her and listened, and did at once what they were bidden, or asked, or recommended to do. Mme. Willemsens had so accustomed them to understand her wishes and desires, that the three seemed to have their thoughts in common. When they went for a walk, and the children, absorbed in their play, ran away to gather a flower or to look at some insect, she watched them with such deep tenderness in her eyes, that the most indifferent passer-by would feel moved,

and stop and smile at the children, and give the mother a glance of friendly greeting. Who would not have admired the dainty neatness of their dress, their sweet, childish voices, the grace of their movements, the promise in their faces, the innate something that told of careful training from the cradle? They seemed as if they had never shed tears nor wailed like other children. Their mother knew, as it were, by electrically swift intuition, the desires and the pains which she anticipated and relieved. She seemed to dread a complaint from one of them more than the loss of her soul. Everything in her children did honor to their mother's training. Their threefold life, seemingly one life, called up vague, fond thoughts; it was like a vision of the dreamed-of bliss of a better world. And the three, so attuned to each other, lived in truth such a life as one might picture for them at first sight—the ordered, simple, and regular life best suited for a child's education.

Both children rose an hour after daybreak and repeated a short prayer, a habit learned in their babyhood. For seven years the sincere petition had been put up every morning on their mother's bed, and begun and ended by a kiss. Then the two brothers went through their morning toilet as scrupulously as any pretty woman; doubtless they had been trained in habits of minute attention to the person, so necessary to health of body and mind, habits in some sort conducive to a sense of wellbeing. Conscientiously they went through their duties, so afraid were they lest their mother should say when she kissed them at breakfast-time, "My darling children, where can you have been to have such black finger-nails already?" Then the two went out into the garden and shook off the dreams of the night in the morning air and dew, until sweeping and dusting operations were completed, and they could learn their lessons in the sitting-room until their mother joined them. But although it was understood that they must not go to their mother's room before a certain hour, they peeped in at the door continually; and these morning inroads, made in defiance of

the original compact, were delicious moments for all three. Marie sprang upon the bed to put his arms about his idolized mother, and Louis, kneeling by the pillow, took her hand in his. Then came inquiries, anxious as a lover's, followed by angelic laughter, passionate childish kisses, eloquent silences, lisping words, and the little ones' stories interrupted and resumed by a kiss, stories seldom finished, though the listener's interest never failed.

"Have you been industrious?" their mother would ask, but in tones so sweet and so kindly that she seemed ready to pity laziness as a misfortune, and to glance through tears at the child who was satisfied with himself.

She knew that the thought of pleasing her put energy into the children's work; and they knew that their mother lived for them, and that all her thoughts and her time were given to them. A wonderful instinct, neither selfishness nor reason, perhaps the first innocent beginnings of sentiment, teaches children to know whether or no they are the first and sole thought, to find out those who love to think of them and for them. If you really love children, the dear little ones, with open hearts and unerring sense of justice, are marvelously ready to respond to love. Their love knows passion and jealousy and the most gracious delicacy of feeling; they find the tenderest words of expression; they trust you—put an entire belief in you. Perhaps there are no undutiful children without undutiful mothers, for a child's affection is always in proportion to the affection that it receives—in early care, in the first words that it hears, in the response of the eyes to which a child first looks for love and life. All these things draw them closer to the mother or drive them apart. God lays the child under the mother's heart, that she may learn that for a long time to come her heart must be its home. And yet—there are mothers cruelly slighted, mothers whose sublime, pathetic tenderness meets only a harsh return, a hideous ingratitude which shows how difficult it is to lay down hard-and-fast rules in matters of feeling.

Here, not one of all the thousand heart ties that bind child and mother had been broken. The three were alone in the world; they lived one life, a life of close sympathy. If Mme. Willemsens was silent in the morning, Louis and Marie would not speak, respecting everything in her, even those thoughts which they did not share. But the older boy, with a precocious power of thought, would not rest satisfied with his mother's assertion that she was perfectly well. He scanned her face with uneasy forebodings; the exact danger he did not know, but dimly he felt it threatening in those purple rings about her eyes, in the deepening hollows under them, and the feverish red that deepened in her face. If Marie's play began to tire her, his sensitive tact was quick to discover this, and he would call to his brother:

"Come, Marie! let us run in to breakfast, I am hungry!"

But when they reached the door, he would look back to catch the expression on his mother's face. She still could find a smile for him, nay, often there were tears in her eyes when some little thing revealed her child's exquisite feeling, a too early comprehension of sorrow.

Mme. Willemsens dressed during the children's early breakfast and game of play, she was coquettish for her darlings; she wished to be pleasing in their eyes; for them she would fain be in all things lovely, a gracious vision, with the charm of some sweet perfume of which one can never have enough.

She was always dressed in time to hear their lessons, which lasted from ten till three, with an interval at noon for lunch, the three taking the meal together in the summer-house. After lunch the children played for an hour, while she—poor woman and happy mother—lay on a long sofa in the summer-house, so placed that she could look out over the soft, ever-changing country of Touraine, a land that you learn to see afresh in all the thousand chance effects produced by daylight and sky and the time of year.

The children scampered through the orchard, scrambled about the terraces, chased the lizards, scarcely less nimble

than they; investigating flowers and seeds and insects, continually referring all questions to their mother, running to and fro between the garden and the summer-house. Children have no need of toys in the country, everything amuses them.

Mme. Willemsens sat at her embroidery during their lessons. She never spoke, nor did she look at masters or pupils; but she followed attentively all that was said, striving to gather the sense of the words to gain a general idea of Louis' progress. If Louis asked a question that puzzled his master, his mother's eyes suddenly lighted up, and she would smile and glance at him with hope in her eyes. Of Marie she asked little. Her desire was with her eldest son. Already she treated him, as it were, respectfully, using all a woman's, all a mother's tact to arouse the spirit of high endeavor in the boy, to teach him to think of himself as capable of great things. She did this with a secret purpose, which Louis was to understand in the future; nay, he understood it already.

Always, the lesson over, she went as far as the gate with the master, and asked strict account of Louis' progress. So kindly and so winning was her manner, that his tutors told her the truth, pointing out where Louis was weak, so that she might help him in his lessons. Then came dinner, and play after dinner, then a walk, and lessons were learned till bedtime.

So their days went. It was a uniform but full life; work and amusements left them not a dull hour in the day. Discouragement and quarreling were impossible. The mother's boundless love made everything smooth. She taught her little sons moderation by refusing them nothing, and submission by making them see underlying Necessity in its many forms; she put heart into them with timely praise; developing and strengthening all that was best in their natures with the care of a good fairy. Tears sometimes rose to her burning eyes as she watched them play, and thought how they had never caused her the slightest vexation. Happiness so far-reaching and complete brings such tears, because for us

it represents the dim imaginings of Heaven which we all of us form in our minds.

Those were delicious hours spent on that sofa in the garden-house, in looking out on sunny days over the wide stretches of river and the picturesque landscape, listening to the sound of her children's voices as they laughed at their own laughter, to the little quarrels that told most plainly of their union of heart, of Louis' paternal care of Marie, of the love that both of them felt for her. They spoke English and French equally well (they had had an English nurse since their babyhood), so their mother talked to them in both languages; directing the bent of their childish minds with admirable skill, admitting no fallacious reasoning, no bad principle. She ruled by kindness, concealing nothing, explaining everything. If Louis wished for books, she was careful to give him interesting yet accurate books—books of biography, the lives of great seamen, great captains, and famous men, for little incidents in their history gave her numberless opportunities of explaining the world and life to her children. She would point out the ways in which men, really great in themselves, had risen from obscurity; how they had started from the lowest ranks of society, with no one to look to but themselves, and achieved noble destinies.

These readings, and they were not the least useful of Louis' lessons, took place while little Marie slept on his mother's knee in the quiet of the summer night, and the Loire reflected the sky; but when they ended, this adorable woman's sadness always seemed to be doubled; she would cease to speak, and sit motionless and pensive, and her eyes would fill with tears.

"Mother, why are you crying?" Louis asked one balmy June evening, just as the twilight of a soft-lit night succeeded to a hot day.

Deeply moved by his trouble, she put her arm about the child's neck and drew him to her.

"Because, my boy, the lot of Jameray Duval, the poor and friendless lad who succeeded at last, will be your lot, yours

and your brother's, and I have brought it upon you. Before very long, dear child, you will be alone in the world, with no one to help or befriend you. While you are still children, I shall leave you, and yet, if only I could wait till you are big enough and know enough to be Marie's guardian! But I shall not live so long. I love you so much that it makes me very unhappy to think of it. Dear children, if only you do not curse me some day!——"

"But why should I curse you some day, mother?"

"Some day," she said, kissing him on the forehead, "you will find out that I have wronged you. I am going to leave you, here, without money, without"—here she hesitated—"without a father," she added, and at the word she burst into tears and put the boy from her gently. A sort of intuition told Louis that his mother wished to be alone, and he carried off Marie, now half awake. An hour later, when his brother was in bed, he stole down and out to the summer-house where his mother was sitting.

"Louis! come here."

The words were spoken in tones delicious to his heart. The boy sprang to his mother's arms, and the two held each other in an almost convulsive embrace.

"*Chérie,*" he said at last, the name by which he often called her, finding that even loving words were too weak to express his feeling, "*chérie,* why are you afraid that you are going to die?"

"I am ill, my poor darling; every day I am losing strength, and there is no cure for my illness; I know that."

"What is the matter with you?"

"Something that I ought to forget; something that you must never know.—You must not know what caused my death."

The boy was silent a while. He stole a glance now and again at his mother; and she, with her eyes raised to the sky, was watching the clouds. It was a sad, sweet moment. Louis could not believe that his mother would die soon, but instinctively he felt trouble which he could not guess. He

respected her long musings. If he had been rather older, he would have read happy memories blended with thoughts of repentance, the whole story of a woman's life in that sublime face—the careless childhood, the loveless marriage, a terrible passion, flowers springing up in storm and struck down by the thunderbolt into an abyss from which there is no return.

"Darling mother," Louis said at last, "why do you hide your pain from me?"

"My boy, we ought to hide our troubles from strangers," she said; "we should show them a smiling face, never speak of ourselves to them, nor think about ourselves; and these rules, put in practice in family life, conduce to its happiness. You will have much to bear one day! Ah me! then think of your poor mother who died smiling before your eyes, hiding her sufferings from you, and you will take courage to endure the ills of life."

She choked back her tears, and tried to make the boy understand the mechanism of existence, the value of money, the standing and consideration that it gives, and its bearing on social position; the honorable means of gaining a livelihood, and the necessity of a training. Then she told him that one of the chief causes of her sadness and her tears was the thought that, on the morrow of her death, he and Marie would be left almost resourceless, with but a slender stock of money, and no friend but God.

"How quick I must be about learning!" cried Louis, giving her a piteous, searching look.

"Oh! how happy I am!" she said, showering kisses and tears on her son. "He understands me!—Louis," she went on, "you will be your brother's guardian, will you not? You promise me that? You are no longer a child!"

"Yes, I promise," he said; "but you are not going to die yet—say that you are not going to die!"

"Poor little ones!" she replied, "love for you keeps the life in me. And this country is so sunny, the air is so bracing, perhaps——"

"You make me love Touraine more than ever," said the child.

From that day, when Mme. Willemsens, foreseeing the approach of death, spoke to Louis of his future, he concentrated his attention on his work, grew more industrious, and less inclined to play than heretofore. When he had coaxed Marie to read a book and to give up boisterous games, there was less noise in the hollow pathways and gardens and terraced walks of La Grenadière. They adapted their lives to their mother's melancholy. Day by day her face was growing pale and wan, there were hollows now in her temples, the lines in her forehead grew deeper night after night.

August came. The little family had been five months at La Grenadière, and their whole life was changed. The old servant grew anxious and gloomy as she watched the almost imperceptible symptoms of slow decline in the mistress, who seemed to be kept in life by an impassioned soul and intense love of her children. Old Annette seemed to see that death was very near. That mistress, beautiful still, was more careful of her appearance than she had ever been; she was at pains to adorn her wasted self, and wore paint on her cheeks; but often while she walked on the upper terrace with the children, Annette's wrinkled face would peer out from between the savin trees by the pump. The old woman would forget her work, and stand with the wet linen in her hands, scarce able to keep back her tears at the sight of Mme. Willemsens', so little like the enchanting woman she once had been.

The pretty house itself, once so gay and bright, looked melancholy; it was a very quiet house now, and the family seldom left it, for the walk to the bridge was too great an effort for Mme. Willemsens. Louis had almost identified himself, as it were, with his mother, and with his suddenly developed powers of imagination he saw the weariness and exhaustion under the red color, and constantly found reasons for taking some shorter walk.

So happy couples coming to Saint-Cyr, then the Petite

Courtille of Tours, and knots of folk out for their evening walk along the "dike," saw a pale, thin figure dressed in black, a woman with a worn yet bright face, gliding like a shadow along the terraces. Great suffering cannot be concealed. The vinedresser's household had grown quiet also. Sometimes the laborer and his wife and children were gathered about the door of their cottage, while Annette was washing linen at the well-head, and Mme. Willemsens and the children sat in the summer-house, and there was not the faintest sound in those gardens gay with flowers. Unknown to Mme. Willemsens, all eyes grew pitiful at the sight of her, she was so good, so thoughtful, so dignified with those with whom she came in contact.

And as for her.—When the autumn days came on, days so sunny and bright in Touraine, bringing with them grapes and ripe fruits and healthful influences which must surely prolong life in spite of the ravages of mysterious disease—she saw no one but her children, taking the utmost that the hour could give her, as if each hour had been her last.

Louis had worked at night, unknown to his mother, and made immense progress between June and September. In algebra he had come as far as equations with two unknown quantities; he had studied descriptive geometry, and drew admirably well; in fact, he was prepared to pass the entrance examination of the École polytechnique.

Sometimes of an evening he went down to the bridge of Tours. There was a lieutenant there on half-pay, an Imperial naval officer, whose manly face, medal, and gait had made an impression on the boy's imagination, and the officer on his side had taken a liking to the lad, whose eyes sparkled with energy. Louis, hungering for tales of adventure, and eager for information, used to follow in the lieutenants wake for the chance of a chat with him. It so happened that the sailor had a friend and comrade in the colonel of a regiment of infantry, struck off the rolls like himself; and young Louis-Gaston had a chance of learning what life was like in camp or on board a man-of-war. Of

course, he plied the veterans with questions; and when he had made up his mind to the hardships of their rough callings, he asked his mother's leave to take country walks by way of amusement. Mme. Willemsens was beyond measure glad that he should ask; the boy's astonished masters had told her that he was overworking himself. So Louis went for long walks. He tried to inure himself to fatigue, climbed the tallest trees with incredible quickness, learned to swim, watched through the night. He was not like the same boy; he was a young man already, with a sunburned face, and a something in his expression that told of deep purpose.

When October came, Mme. Willemsens could only rise at noon. The sunshine, reflected by the surface of the Loire, and stored up by the rocks, raised the temperature of the air till it was almost as warm and soft as the atmosphere of the Bay of Naples, for which reason the faculty recommend the place of abode. At mid-day she came out to sit under the shade of green leaves with the two boys, who never wandered from her now. Lessons had come to an end. Mother and children wished to live the life of heart and heart together, with no disturbing element, no outside cares. No tears now, no joyous outcries. The elder boy, lying in the grass at his mother's side, basked in her eyes like a lover, and kissed her feet. Marie, the restless one, gathered flowers for her, and brought them with a subdued look, standing on tiptoe to put a girlish kiss on her lips. And the pale woman, with the great tired eyes and languid movements, never uttered a word of complaint, and smiled upon her children, so full of life and health—it was a sublime picture, lacking no melancholy autumn pomp of yellow leaves and half-despoiled branches, nor the softened sunlight and pale clouds of the skies of Touraine.

At last the doctor forbade Mme. Willemsens to leave her room. Every day it was brightened by the flowers that she loved, and her children were always with her. One day, early in November, she sat at the piano for the last time. A pict-

ure—a Swiss landscape—hung above the instrument; and at the window she could see her children standing with their heads close together. Again and again she looked from the children to the landscape, and then again at the children. Her face flushed, her fingers flew with passionate feeling over the ivory keys. This was her last great day, an unmarked day of festival, held in her own soul by the spirit of her memories. When the doctor came, he ordered her to stay in bed. The alarming dictum was received with bewildered silence.

When the doctor had gone, she turned to the older boy.

"Louis," she said, "take me out on the terrace, so that I may see my country once more."

The boy gave his arm at those simply uttered words, and brought his mother out upon the terrace; but her eyes turned, perhaps unconsciously, to heaven rather than to the earth, and, indeed, it would have been hard to say whether heaven or earth was the fairer—for the clouds traced shadowy outlines, like the grandest Alpine glaciers, against the sky. Mme. Willemsens' brows contracted vehemently; there was a look of anguish and remorse in her eyes. She caught the children's hands, and clutched them to a heavily-throbbing heart.

" 'Parentage unknown!' " she cried, with a look that went to their hearts. "Poor angels, what will become of you? And when you are twenty years old, what strict account may you not require of my life and your own?"

She put the children from her, and leaning her arms upon the balustrade, stood for a while hiding her face, alone with herself, fearful of all eyes. When she recovered from the paroxysm, she saw Louis and Marie kneeling on either side of her, like two angels; they watched the expression of her face, and smiled lovingly at her.

"If only I could take that smile with me!" she said, drying her eyes.

Then she went into the house and took to the bed, which she would only leave for her coffin.

A week went by, one day exactly like another. Old Annette and Louis took it in turns to sit up with Mme. Willemsens, never taking their eyes from the invalid. It was the deeply tragical hour that comes in all our lives, the hour of listening in terror to every deep breath lest it should be the last, a dark hour protracted over many days. On the fifth day of that fatal week the doctor interdicted flowers in the room. The illusions of life were going one by one.

Then Marie and his brother felt their mother's lips hot as fire beneath their kisses; and at last, on the Saturday evening, Mme. Willemsens was too ill to bear the slightest sound, and her room as left in disorder. This neglect for a woman of refined taste, who clung so persistently to the graces of life, meant the beginning of the death-agony. After this, Louis refused to leave his mother. On Sunday night, in the midst of the deepest silence, when Louis thought that she had grown drowsy, he saw a white, moist hand move the curtain in the lamplight.

"My son!" she said. There was something so solemn in the dying woman's tones, that the power of her wrought-up soul produced a violent reaction on the boy; he felt an intense heat pass through the marrow of his bones.

"What is it, mother?"

"Listen! To-morrow all will be over for me. We shall see each other no more. To-morrow you will be a man, my child. So I am obliged to make some arrangements, which must remain a secret, known only to us. Take the key of my little table. That is it. Now open the drawer. You will find two sealed papers to the left. There is the name of Louis on one, and on the other Marie."

"Here they are, mother."

"Those are your certificates of birth, darling; you will want them. Give them to our poor, old Annette to keep for you; ask her for them when you need them. Now," she continued, "is there not another paper as well, something in my handwriting?"

"Yes, mother," and Louis began to read, *"Marie Willemsens, born at——"*

"That is enough," she broke in quickly, "do not go on. When I am dead, give that paper, too, to Annette, and tell her to send it to the registrar at Saint-Cyr; it will be wanted if my certificate of death is to be made out in due form. Now find writing materials for a letter which I will dictate to you."

When she saw that he was ready to begin, and turned towards her for the words, they came from her quietly:—

"Monsieur le Comte, your wife, Lady Brandon, died at Saint-Cyr, near Tours, in the department of Indre-et-Loire. She forgave you."

"Sign yourself——" she stopped, hesitating and perturbed.

"Are you feeling worse?" asked Louis.

"Put 'Louis-Gaston,'" she said.

She sighed, then she went on.

"Seal the letter, and direct it. To Lord Brandon, Brandon Square, Hyde Park, London, Angleterre.—That is right. When I am dead, post the letter in Tours, and prepay the postage.—Now," she added, after a pause, "take the little pocketbook that you know, and come here, my dear child. . . . There are twelve thousand francs in it," she said, when Louis had returned to her side. "That is all your own. Oh me! you would have been better off if your father——"

"My father," cried the boy, "where is he?"

"He is dead," she said, laying her finger on her lips; "he died to save my honor and my life."

She looked upwards. If any tears had been left to her, she could have wept for pain.

"Louis," she continued, "swear to me, as I lie here, that you will forget all that you have written, all that I have told you."

"Yes, mother."

"Kiss me, dear angel."

She was silent for a long while, she seemed to be drawing

strength from God, and to be measuring her words by the life that remained in her.

"Listen," she began. "Those twelve thousand francs are all that you have in the world. You must keep the money upon you, because when I am dead the lawyers will come and seal everything up. Nothing will be yours then, not even your mother. All that remains for you to do will be to go out, poor orphan children, God knows where. I have made Annette's future secure. She will have an annuity of a hundred crowns, and she will stay at Tours no doubt. But what will you do for yourself and your brother?"

She raised herself, and looked at the brave child, standing by her bedside. There were drops of perspiration on his forehead, he was pale with emotion, and his eyes were dim with tears.

"I have thought it over, mother," he answered in a deep voice. "I will take Marie to the school here in Tours. I will give ten thousand francs to our old Annette, and ask her to take care of them, and to look after Marie. Then, with the remaining two thousand francs, I will go to Brest, and go to sea as an apprentice. While Marie is at school, I will rise to be a lieutenant on board a man-of-war. There, after all, die in peace, my mother; I shall come back again a rich man, and our little one shall go to the École polytechnique, and I will find a career to suit his bent."

A gleam of joy shone in the dying woman's eyes. Two tears brimmed over, and fell over her fevered cheeks; then a deep sigh escaped between her lips. The sudden joy of finding the father's spirit in the son, who had grown all at once to be a man, almost killed her.

"Angel of heaven," she cried, weeping, "by one word you have effaced all my sorrows. Ah! I can bear them.—This is my son," she said, "I bore, I reared this man," and she raised her hands above her, and clasped them as if in ecstasy, then she lay back on the pillow.

"Mother, your face is growing pale!" cried the lad.

"Some one must go for a priest," she answered, with a dying voice.

Louis wakened Annette, and the terrified old woman hurried to the parsonage at Saint-Cyr.

When morning came, Mme. Willemsens received the sacrament amid the most touching surroundings. Her children were kneeling in the room, with Annette and the vinedresser's family, simple folk, who had already become part of the household. The silver crucifix, carried by a chorister, a peasant child from the village, was lifted up, and the dying mother received the Viaticum from an aged priest. The Viaticum! sublime word, containing an idea yet more sublime, an idea only possessed by the apostolic religion of the Roman church.

"This woman has suffered greatly!" the old curé said in his simple way.

Marie Willemsens heard no voices now, but her eyes were still fixed upon her children. Those about her listened in terror to her breathing in the deep silence; already it came more slowly, though at intervals a deep sigh told them that she still lived, and of a struggle within her; then at last it ceased. Every one burst into tears except Marie. He, poor child, was still too young to know what death meant.

Annette and the vinedresser's wife closed the eyes of the adorable woman, whose beauty shone out in all its radiance after death. Then the women took possession of the chamber of death, removed the furniture, wrapped the dead in her winding-sheet, and laid her upon the couch. They lit tapers about her, and arranged everything—the crucifix, the sprigs of box, and the holy-water stoup—after the custom of the countryside, bolting the shutters and drawing the curtains. Later the curate came to pass the night in prayer with Louis, who refused to leave his mother. On Tuesday morning an old woman and two children and a vinedresser's wife followed the dead to her grave. These were the only mourners. Yet this was a woman whose wit and beauty and charm had won a European reputation, a woman whose funeral, if it had taken place in London, would have been recorded in pompous newspaper paragraphs, as a sort of aristocratic rite, if she



had not committed the sweetest of crimes, a crime always expiated in this world, so that the pardoned spirit may enter heaven. Marie cried when they threw the earth on his mother's coffin; he understood that he should see her no more.

A simple, wooden cross, set up to mark her grave, bore this inscription, due to the curé of Saint-Cyr:—

HERE LIES

AN UNHAPPY WOMAN,

WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-SIX.

KNOWN IN HEAVEN BY THE NAME OF AUGUSTA.

Pray for her!

When all was over, the children came back to La Grenadière to take a last look at their home; then, hand in hand, they turned to go with Annette, leaving the vinedresser in charge, with directions to hand over everything duly to the proper authorities.

At this moment, Annette called to Louis from the steps by the kitchen door, and took him aside with, "Here is madame's ring, Monsieur Louis."

The sight of this vivid remembrance of his dead mother moved him so deeply that he wept. In his fortitude, he had not even thought of this supreme piety; and he flung his arms round the old woman's neck. Then the three set out down the beaten path, and the stone staircase, and so to Tours, without turning their heads.

"Mamma used to come there!" Marie said when they reached the bridge.

Annette had a relative, a retired dressmaker, who lived in the Rue de la Guerche. She took the two children to this cousin's house, meaning that they should live together

thenceforth. But Louis told her of his plans, gave Marie's certificate of birth and the ten thousand francs into her keeping, and the two went the next morning to take Marie to school.

Louis very briefly explained his position to the headmaster, and went. Marie came with him as far as the gateway. There Louis gave solemn parting words of the tenderest counsel, telling Marie that he would now be left alone in the world. He looked at his brother for a moment, and put his arms about him, took one more long look, brushed a tear from his eyes, and went, turning again and again till the very last to see his brother standing there in the gateway of the school.

A month later Louis-Gaston, now an apprentice on board a man-of-war, left the harbor of Rochefort. Leaning over the bulwarks of the corvette *Iris,* he watched the coast of France receding swiftly till it became indistinguishable from the faint blue horizon line. In a little while he felt that he was really alone, and lost in the wide ocean, lost and alone in the world and in life.

"There is no need to cry, lad; there is a God for us all," said an old sailor, with rough kindliness in his thick voice.

The boy thanked him with pride in his eyes. Then he bowed his head, and resigned himself to a sailor's life. He was a father.

ANGOULÊME, *August* 1832.

THE MESSAGE

To M. le Marquis Damaso Pareto.

I HAVE always longed to tell a simple and true story, which should strike terror into two young lovers, and drive them to take refuge each in the other's heart, as two children cling together at the sight of a snake by a woodside. At the risk of spoiling my story and of being taken for a coxcomb, I state my intention at the outset.

I myself played a part in this almost commonplace tragedy; so if it fails to interest you, the failure will be in part my own fault, in part owing to historical veracity. Plenty of things in real life are superlatively uninteresting; so that it is one-half of art to select from realities those which contain possibilities of poetry.

In 1819 I was traveling from Paris to Moulins. The state of my finances obliged me to take an outside place. Englishmen, as you know, regard those airy perches on the top of the coach as the best seats; and for the first few miles I discovered abundance of excellent reasons for justifying the opinion of our neighbors. A young fellow, apparently in somewhat better circumstances, who came to take the seat beside me from preference, listened to my reasoning with inoffensive smiles. An approximate nearness of age, a similarity in ways of thinking, a common love of fresh air, and of the rich landscape scenery through which the coach was lumbering along,—these things, together with an indescribable magnetic something, drew us before long into one of those short-lived traveler's intimacies, in which we unbend with the more complacency because the intercourse is by its very nature transient, and makes no implicit demands upon the future.

We had not come thirty leagues before we were talking of women and of love. Then, with all the circumspection demanded in such matters, we proceeded naturally to the topic of our lady-loves. Young as we both were, we still admired "the woman of a certain age," that is to say, the woman between thirty-five and forty. Oh! any poet who should have listened to our talk, for heaven knows how many stages beyond Montargis, would have reaped a harvest of flaming epithet, rapturous description, and very tender confidences. Our bashful fears, our silent interjections, our blushes, as we met each other's eyes, were expressive with an eloquence, a boyish charm, which I have ceased to feel. One must remain young, no doubt, to understand youth.

Well, we understood one another to admiration on all the essential points of passion. We had laid it down as an axiom at the very outset, that in theory and practice there was no such piece of driveling nonsense in this world as a certificate of birth; that plenty of women were younger at forty than many a girl of twenty; and, to come to the point, that a woman is no older than she looks.

This theory set no limits to the age of love, so we struck out, in all good faith, into a boundless sea. At length, when we had portrayed our mistresses as young, charming, and devoted to us, women of rank, women of taste, intellectual and clever; when we had endowed them with little feet, a satin, nay, a delicately fragrant skin, then came the admission—on his part that Madame Such-an-one was thirty-eight years old, and on mine that I worshiped a woman of forty. Whereupon, as if released on either side from some kind of vague fear, our confidences came thick and fast, when we found that we were of the same confraternity of love. It was which of us should overtop the other in sentiment.

One of us had traveled six hundred miles to see his mistress for an hour. The other, at the risk of being shot for a wolf, had prowled about her park to meet her one night. Out came all our follies in fact. If it is pleasant to re-

member past dangers, is it not at least as pleasant to recall past delights? We live through the joy a second time. We told each other everything, our perils, our great joys, our little pleasures, and even the humors of the situation. My friend's countess had lighted a cigar for him; mine made chocolate for me, and wrote to me every day when we did not meet; his lady had come to spend three days with him at the risk of ruin to her reputation; mine had done even better, or worse, if you will have it so. Our countesses, moreover, were adored by their husbands; these gentlemen were enslaved by the charm possessed by every woman who loves; and, with even supererogatory simplicity, afforded us that just sufficient spice of danger which increases pleasure. Ah! how quickly the wind swept away our talk and our happy laughter!

When we reached Pouilly, I scanned my new friend with much interest, and truly, it was not difficult to imagine him the hero of a very serious love affair. Picture to yourselves a young man of middle height, but very well proportioned, a bright, expressive face, dark hair, blue eyes, moist lips, and white and even teeth. A certain not unbecoming pallor still overspread his delicately cut features, and there were faint dark circles about his eyes, as if he were recovering from an illness. Add, furthermore, that he had white and shapely hands, of which he was as careful as a pretty woman should be; add that he seemed to be very well informed, and was decidedly clever, and it should not be difficult for you to imagine that my traveling companion was more than worthy of a countess. Indeed, many a girl might have wished for such a husband, for he was a Vicomte with an income of twelve or fifteen thousand livres, "to say nothing of expectations."

About a league out of Pouilly the coach was overturned. My luckless comrade, thinking to save himself, jumped to the edge of a newly-ploughed field, instead of following the fortunes of the vehicle and clinging tightly to the roof, as I did. He either miscalculated in some way, or he slipped;

how it happened, I do not know, but the coach fell over upon him, and he was crushed under it.

We carried him into a peasant's cottage, and there, amid the moans wrung from him by horrible sufferings, he contrived to give me a commission—a sacred task, in that it was laid upon me by a dying man's last wish. Poor boy, all through his agony he was torturing himself in his young simplicity of heart with the thought of the painful shock to his mistress when she should suddenly read of his death in a newspaper. He begged me to go myself to break the news to her. He bade me look for a key which he wore on a ribbon about his neck. I found it half buried in the flesh, but the dying boy did not utter a sound as I extricated it as gently as possible from the wound which it had made. He had scarcely given me the necessary directions—I was to go to his home at La Charité-sur-Loire for his mistress' love-letters, which he conjured me to return to her—when he grew speechless in the middle of a sentence; but from his last gesture, I understood that the fatal key would be my passport in his mother's house. It troubled him that he was powerless to utter a single word to thank me, for of my wish to serve him he had no doubt. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, then his eyelids drooped in token of farewell. and his head sank, and he died. His death was the only fatal accident caused by the overturn.

"But it was partly his own fault," the coachman said to me.

At La Charité, I executed the poor fellow's dying wishes. His mother was away from home, which in a manner was fortunate for me. Nevertheless, I had to assuage the grief of an old woman-servant, who staggered back at the tidings of her young master's death, and sank half-dead into a chair when she saw the blood-stained key. But I had another and more dreadful sorrow to think of, the sorrow of a woman who had lost her last love; so I left the old woman to her prosopopeia, and carried off the precious correspondence, carefully sealed by my friend of a day.

The Countess' château was some eight leagues beyond Moulins, and then there was some distance to walk across country. So it was not exactly an easy matter to deliver my message. For divers reasons into which I need not enter, I had barely sufficient money to take me to Moulins. However, my youthful enthusiasm determined to hasten thither on foot as fast as possible. Bad news travels swiftly, and I wished to be first at the château. I asked for the shortest way, and hurried through the field paths of the Bourbonnais, bearing, as it were, a dead man on my back. The nearer I came to the Château de Montpersan, the more aghast I felt at the idea of my strange self-imposed pilgrimage. Vast numbers of romantic fancies ran in my head. I imagined all kinds of situations in which I might find this Comtesse de Montpersan, or, to observe the laws of romance, this *Juliette,* so passionately beloved of my traveling companion. I sketched out ingenious answers to the questions which she might be supposed to put to me. At every turn of a wood, in every beaten pathway, I rehearsed a modern version of the scene in which Sosie describes the battle to his lantern. To my shame be it said, I had thought at first of nothing but the part that *I* was to play, of my own cleverness, of how I should demean myself; but now that I was in the country, an ominous thought flashed through my soul like a thunderbolt tearing its way through a veil of gray cloud.

What an awful piece of news it was for a woman whose whole thoughts were full of her young lover, who was looking forward hour by hour to a joy which no words can express, a woman who had been at a world of pains to invent plausible pretexts to draw him to her side. Yet, after all, it was a cruel deed of charity to be the messenger of death! So I hurried on, splashing and bemiring myself in the byways of the Bourbonnais.

Before very long I reached a great chestnut avenue with a pile of buildings at the further end—the Château of Montpersan stood out against the sky like a mass of brown cloud, with sharp, fantastic outlines. All the doors of the château

stood open. This in itself disconcerted me, and routed all my plans; but I went in boldly, and in a moment found myself between a couple of dogs, barking as your true country-bred animal can bark. The sound brought out a hurrying servant-maid; who, when informed that I wished to speak to Mme. la Comtesse, waved a hand towards the masses of trees in the English park which wound about the château, with "Madame is out there——"

"Many thanks," said I ironically. I might have wandered for a couple of hours in the park with her "out there" to guide me.

In the meantime, a pretty little girl, with curling hair, dressed in a white frock, a rose-colored sash, and a broad frill at the throat, had overheard or guessed the question and its answer. She gave me a glance and vanished, calling in shrill, childish tones:

"Mother, here is a gentleman who wishes to speak to you!"

And, along the winding alleys, I followed the skipping and dancing white frill, a sort of will-o'-the-wisp, that showed me the way among the trees.

I must make a full confession. I stopped behind the last shrub in the avenue, pulled up my collar, rubbed my shabby hat and my trousers with the cuffs of my sleeves, dusted my coat with the sleeves themselves, and gave them a final cleansing rub one against the other. I buttoned my coat carefully so as to exhibit the inner, always the least worn, side of the cloth, and finally had turned down the tops of my trousers over my boots, artistically cleaned in the grass. Thanks to this Gascon toilet, I could hope that the lady would not take me for the local rate collector; but now when my thoughts travel back to that episode of my youth, I sometimes laugh at my own expense.

Suddenly, just as I was composing myself, at a turning in the green walk, among a wilderness of flowers lighted up by a hot ray of sunlight, I saw Juliette—Juliette and her husband. The pretty little girl held her mother by the hand,

and it was easy to see that the lady had quickened her pace somewhat at the child's ambiguous phrase. Taken aback by the sight of a total stranger, who bowed with a tolerably awkward air, she looked at me with a coolly courteous expression and an adorable pout, in which I, who knew her secret, could read the full extent of her disappointment. I sought, but sought in vain, to remember any of the elegant phrases so laboriously prepared.

This momentary hesitation gave the lady's husband time to come forward. Thoughts by the myriad flitted through my brain. To give myself a countenance, I got out a few sufficiently feeble inquiries, asking whether the persons present were really M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de Montpersan. These imbecilities gave me time to form my own conclusions at a glance, and, with a perspicacity rare at that age, to analyze the husband and wife whose solitude was about to be so rudely disturbed.

The husband seemed to be a specimen of a certain type of nobleman, the fairest ornaments of the provinces of our day. He wore big shoes with stout soles to them. I put the shoes first advisedly, for they made an even deeper impression upon me than a seedy black coat, a pair of threadbare trousers, a flabby cravat, or a crumpled shirt collar. There was a touch of the magistrate in the man, a good deal more of the Councillor of the Prefecture, all the self-importance of the mayor of the arrondissement, the local autocrat, and the soured temper of the unsuccessful candidate who has never been returned since the year 1816. As to countenance—a wizened, wrinkled, sunburned face, and long, sleek locks of scanty gray hair; as to character—an incredible mixture of homely sense and sheer silliness; of a rich man's overbearing ways, and a total lack of manners; just the kind of husband who is almost entirely led by his wife, yet imagines himself to be the master; apt to domineer in trifles, and to let more important things slip past unheeded—there you have the man!

But the Countess! Ah, how sharp and startling the con-

trast between husband and wife! The Countess was a little woman, with a flat, graceful figure and enchanting shape; so fragile, so dainty was she, that you would have feared to break some bone if you so much as touched her. She wore a white muslin dress, a rose-colored sash, and rose-colored ribbons in the pretty cap on her head; her chemisette was moulded so deliciously by her shoulders and the loveliest rounded contours, that the sight of her awakened an irresistible desire of possession in the depths of the heart. Her eyes were bright and dark and expressive, her movements graceful, her foot charming. An experienced man of pleasure would not have given her more than thirty years, her forehead was so girlish. She had all the most transient delicate detail of youth in her face. In character she seemed to me to resemble the Comtesse de Lignolles and the Marquise de B——, two feminine types always fresh in the memory of any young man who has read Louvet's romance.

In a moment I saw how things stood, and took a diplomatic course that would have done credit to an old ambassador. For once, and perhaps for the only time in my life, I used tact, and knew in what the special skill of courtiers and men of the world consists.

I have had so many battles to fight since those heedless days, that they have left me no time to distil all the least actions of daily life, and to do everything so that it falls in with those rules of etiquette and good taste which wither the most generous emotions.

"M. le Comte," I said with an air of mystery, "I should like a few words with you," and I fell back a pace or two.

He followed my example. Juliette left us together, going away unconcernedly, like a wife who knew that she can learn her husband's secrets as soon as she chooses to know them.

I told the Count briefly of the death of my traveling companion. The effect produced by my news convinced me that his affection for his young collaborator was cordial enough, and this emboldened me to make reply as I did.

"My wife will be in despair," cried he; "I shall be obliged to break the news of this unhappy event with great caution."

"Monsieur," said I, "I addressed myself to you in the first instance, as in duty bound. I could not, without first informing you, deliver a message to Mme. la Comtesse, a message intrusted to me by an entire stranger; but this commission is a sort of sacred trust, a secret of which I have no power to dispose. From the high idea of your character which he gave me, I felt sure that you would not oppose me in the fulfilment of a dying request. Mme. la Comtesse will be at liberty to break the silence which is imposed upon me."

At this eulogy, the Count swung his head very amiably, responded with a tolerably involved compliment, and finally left me a free field. We returned to the house. The bell rang, and I was invited to dinner. As we came up to the house, a grave and silent couple, Juliette stole a glance at us. Not a little surprised to find her husband contriving some frivolous excuse for leaving us together, she stopped short, giving me a glance—such a glance as women only can give you. In that look of hers there was the pardonable curiosity of the mistress of the house confronted with a guest dropped down upon her from the skies and innumerable doubts, certainly warranted by the state of my clothes, by my youth and my expression, all singularly at variance; there was all the disdain of the adored mistress, in whose eyes all men save one are as nothing; there were involuntary tremors and alarms; and, above all, the thought that it was tiresome to have an unexpected guest just now, when, no doubt, she had been scheming to enjoy full solitude for her love. This mute eloquence I understood in her eyes, and all the pity and compassion in me made answer in a sad smile. I thought of her, as I had seen her for one moment, in the pride of her beauty; standing in the sunny afternoon in the narrow alley with the flowers on either hand; and as that fair wonderful picture rose before my eyes, I could not repress a sigh.

"Alas, madame, I have just made a very arduous journey ——, undertaken solely on your account."

"Sir!"

"Oh! it is on behalf of one who calls you Juliette that I am come," I continued. Her face grew white.

"You will not see him to-day."

"Is he ill?" she asked, and her voice sank lower.

"Yes. But for pity's sake, control yourself. . . . He intrusted me with secrets that concern you, and you may be sure that never messenger could be more discreet nor more devoted than I."

"What is the matter with him?"

"How if he loved you no longer?"

"Oh! that is impossible!" she cried, and a faint smile, nothing less than frank, broke over her face. Then all at once a kind of shudder ran through her, and she reddened, and she gave me a wild, swift glance as she asked:

"Is he alive?"

Great God! What a terrible phrase! I was too young to bear that tone in her voice; I made no reply, only looked at the unhappy woman in helpless bewilderment.

"Monsieur, monsieur, give me an answer!" she cried.

"Yes, madame."

"Is it true? Oh! tell me the truth; I can hear the truth. Tell me the truth! Any pain would be less keen than this suspense."

I answered by two tears wrung from me by that strange tone of hers. She leaned against a tree with a faint, sharp cry.

"Madame, here comes your husband!"

"Have I a husband?" and with those words she fled away out of sight.

"Well," cried the Count, "dinner is growing cold.—Come, monsieur."

Thereupon I followed the master of the house into the dining-room. Dinner was served with all the luxury which we have learned to expect in Paris. There were five covers laid, three for the Count and Countess and their little daughter; my own, which should have been *his;* and another for the canon of Saint-Denis, who said grace, and then asked:

"Why, where can our dear Countess be?"

"Oh! she will be here directly," said the Count. He had hastily helped us to the soup, and was dispatching an ample plateful with portentous speed.

"Oh! nephew," exclaimed the canon, "if your wife were here, you would behave more rationally."

"Papa will make himself ill!" said the child with a mischievous look.

Just after this extraordinary gastronomical episode, as the Count was eagerly helping himself to a slice of venison, a housemaid came in with, "We cannot find madame anywhere, sir!"

I sprang up at the words with a dread in my mind, my fears written so plainly in my face, that the old canon came out after me into the garden. The Count, for the sake of appearances, came as far as the threshold.

"Don't go, don't go!" called he. "Don't trouble yourselves in the least," but he did not offer to accompany us.

We three—the canon, the housemaid, and I—hurried through the garden walks and over the bowling-green in the park, shouting, listening for an answer, growing more uneasy every moment. As we hurried along, I told the story of the fatal accident, and discovered how strongly the maid was attached to her mistress, for she took my secret dread far more seriously than the canon. We went along by the pools of water; all over the park we went; but we neither found the Countess nor any sign that she had passed that way. At last we turned back, and under the walls of some outbuildings I heard a smothered, wailing cry, so stifled that it was scarcely audible. The sound seemed to come from a place that might have been a granary. I went in at all risks, and there we found Juliette. With the instinct of despair, she had buried herself deep in the hay, hiding her face in it to deaden those dreadful cries—pudency even stronger than grief. She was sobbing and crying like a child, but there was a more poignant, more piteous sound in the sobs. There was nothing left in the world for her. The maid pulled the hay from her, her mistress submitting with the supine listlessness of a dying

animal. The maid could find nothing to say but "There! madame; there, there——"

"What is the matter with her? What is it, niece?" the old canon kept on exclaiming.

At last, with the girl's help, I carried Juliette to her room, gave orders that she was not to be disturbed, and that every one must be told that the Countess was suffering from a sick headache. Then we came down to the dining-room, the canon and I.

Some little time had passed since we left the dinner-table; I had scarcely given a thought to the Count since we left him under the peristyle; his indifference had surprised me, but my amazement increased when we came back and found him seated philosophically at table. He had eaten pretty nearly all the dinner, to the huge delight of his little daughter; the child was smiling at her father's flagrant infraction of the Countess' rules. The man's odd indifference was explained to me by a mild altercation which at once arose with the canon. The Count was suffering from some serious complaint. I cannot remember now what it was, but his medical advisers had put him on a very severe regimen, and the ferocious hunger familiar to convalescents, sheer animal appetite, had overpowered all human sensibilities. In that little space I had seen frank and undisguised human nature under two very different aspects, in such a sort that there was a certain grotesque element in the very midst of a most terrible tragedy.

The evening that followed was dreary. I was tired. The canon racked his brains to discover a reason for his niece's tears. The lady's husband silently digested his dinner; content, apparently, with the Countess' rather vague explanation, sent through the maid, putting forward some feminine ailment as her excuse. We all went early to bed.

As I passed the door of the Countess' room on the way to my night's lodging, I asked the servant timidly for news of her. She heard my voice, and would have me come in, and tried to talk, but in vain—she could not utter a scund. She

bent her head, and I withdrew. In spite of the painful agitation, which I had felt to the full as youth can feel, I fell asleep, tired out with my forced march.

It was late in the night when I was awakened by the grating sound of curtain rings drawn sharply over the metal rods. There sat the Countess at the foot of my bed. The light from a lamp set on my table fell full upon her face.

"Is it really true, monsieur, quite true?" she asked. "I do not know how I can live after that awful blow which struck me down a little while since; but just now I feel calm. I want to know everything."

"What calm!" I said to myself as I saw the ghastly pallor of her face contrasting with her brown hair, and heard the guttural tones of her voice. The havoc wrought in her drawn features filled me with dumb amazement.

Those few hours had bleached her; she had lost a woman's last glow of autumn color. Her eyes were red and swollen, nothing of their beauty remained, nothing looked out of them save her bitter and exceeding grief; it was as if a gray cloud covered the place through which the sun had shone.

I gave her the story of the accident in a few words, without laying too much stress on some too harrowing details. I told her about our first day's journey, and how it had been filled with recollections of her and of love. And she listened eagerly, without shedding a tear, leaning her face towards me, as some zealous doctor might lean to watch any change in a patient's face. When she seemed to me to have opened her whole heart to pain, to be deliberately plunging herself into misery with the first delirious frenzy of despair, I caught at my opportunity, and told her of the fears that troubled the poor dying man, told her how and why it was that he had given me this fatal message. Then her tears were dried by the fires that burned in the dark depths within her. She grew even paler. When I drew the letters from beneath my pillow and held them out to her, she took them mechanically; then, trembling from head to foot, she said in a hollow voice:

"And *I* burned all his letters!—I have nothing of him left!—Nothing! nothing!"

She struck her hand against her forehead.

"Madame——" I began.

She glanced at me in the convulsion of grief.

"I cut this from his head, this lock of his hair."

And I gave her that last imperishable token that had been a very part of him she loved. Ah! if you had felt, as I felt then, her burning tears falling on your hands, you would know what gratitude is, when it follows so closely upon the benefit. Her eyes shone with a feverish glitter, a faint ray of happiness gleamed out of her terrible suffering, as she grasped my hands in hers, and said, in a choking voice:

"Ah! you love! May you be happy always. May you never lose her whom you love."

She broke off, and fled away with her treasure.

Next morning, this night-scene among my dreams seemed like a dream; to make sure of the piteous truth, I was obliged to look fruitlessly under my pillow for the packet of letters. There is no need to tell you how the next day went. I spent several hours of it with the Juliette whom my poor comrade had so praised to me. In her lightest words, her gestures, in all that she did and said, I saw proofs of the nobleness of soul, the delicacy of feeling which made her what she was, one of those beloved, loving, and self-sacrificing natures so rarely found upon this earth.

In the evening the Comte de Montpersan came himself as far as Moulins with me. There he spoke with a kind of embarrassment:

"Monsieur, if it is not abusing your good-nature, and acting very inconsiderately towards a stranger to whom we are already under obligations, would you have the goodness, as you are going to Paris, to remit a sum of money to M. de—— (I forget the name), in the Rue du Sentier; I owe him an amount, and he asked me to send it as soon as possible."

"Willingly," said I. And in the innocence of my heart, I took charge of a rouleau of twenty-five louis d'or, which paid

the expenses of my journey back to Paris; and only when, on my arrival, I went to the address indicated to repay the amount to M. de Montpersan's correspondent, did I understand the ingenious delicacy with which Julie had obliged me. Was not all the genius of a loving woman revealed in such a way of lending, in her reticence with regard to a poverty easily guessed?

And what rapture to have this adventure to tell to a woman who clung to you more closely in dread, saying, "Oh, my dear, not you! *you* must not die!"

Paris, *January* 1832.

GOBSECK

To M. le Baron Barchou de Penhoen.

Among all the pupils of the Oratorian school at Vendôme, we are, I think, the only two who have afterwards met in mid-career of a life of letters—we who once were cultivating Philosophy when by rights we should have been minding our De viris. When we met, you were engaged upon your noble works on German philosophy, and I upon this study. So neither of us has missed his vocation; and you, when you see your name here, will feel, no doubt, as much pleasure as he who inscribes his work to you.—Your old schoolfellow,

1840. DE BALZAC.

It was one o'clock in the morning, during the winter of 1829-30, but in the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's salon two persons stayed on who did not belong to her family circle. A young and good-looking man heard the clock strike, and took his leave. When the courtyard echoed with the sound of a departing carriage, the Vicomtesse looked up, saw that no one was present save her brother and a friend of the family finishing their game of piquet, and went across to her daughter. The girl, standing by the chimney-piece, apparently examining a transparent fire-screen, was listening to the sounds from the courtyard in a way that justified certain maternal fears.

"Camille," said the Vicomtesse, "if you continue to behave to young Comte de Restaud as you have done this evening, you will oblige me to see no more of him here. Listen, child, and if you have any confidence in my love, let me guide you in life. At seventeen one cannot judge of past or future, nor

of certain social considerations. I have only one thing to say to you. M. de Restaud has a mother, a mother who would waste millions of francs; a woman of no birth, a Mlle. Goriot; people talked a good deal about her at one time. She behaved so badly to her own father, that she certainly does not deserve to have so good a son. The young Count adores her, and maintains her in her position with dutifulness worthy of all praise, and he is extremely good to his brother and sister.—But however admirable *his* behavior may be," the Vicomtesse added with a shrewd expression, "so long as his mother lives, any family would take alarm at the idea of intrusting a daughter's fortune and future to young Restaud."

"I overheard a word now and again in your talk with Mlle. de Grandlieu," cried the friend of the family, "and it made me anxious to put in a word of my own.—I have won, M. le Comte," he added, turning to his opponent. "I shall throw you over and go to your niece's assistance."

"See what it is to have an attorney's ears!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse. "My dear Derville, how could you know what I was saying to Camille in a whisper?"

"I knew it from your looks," answered Derville, seating himself in a low chair by the fire.

Camille's uncle went to her side, and Mme. de Grandlieu took up her position on a hearth stool between her daughter and Derville.

"The time has come for telling a story, which should modify your judgment as to Ernest de Restaud's prospects."

"A story?" cried Camille. "Do begin at once, monsieur."

The glance that Derville gave the Vicomtesse told her that this tale was meant for her. The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, be it said, was one of the greatest ladies in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, by reason of her fortune and her ancient name; and though it may seem improbable that a Paris attorney should speak so familiarly to her, or be so much at home in her house, the fact is nevertheless easily explained.

When Mme. de Grandlieu returned to France with the

Royal family, she came to Paris, and at first lived entirely on the pension allowed her out of the Civil List by Louis XVIII. —an intolerable position. The Hôtel de Grandlieu had been sold by the Republic. It came to Derville's knowledge that there were flaws in the title, and he thought that it ought to return to the Vicomtesse. He instituted proceedings for nullity of contract, and gained the day. Encouraged by this success, he used legal quibbles to such purpose that he compelled some institution or other to disgorge the Forest of Liceney. Then he won certain lawsuits against the Canal d'Orléans, and recovered a tolerably large amount of property, with which the Emperor had endowed various public institutions. So it fell out that, thanks to the young attorney's skilful management, Mme. de Grandlieu's income reached the sum of some sixty thousand francs, to say nothing of the vast sums returned to her by the law of indemnity. And Derville, a man of high character, well informed, modest, and pleasant in company, became the house-friend of the family.

By his conduct of Mme. de Grandlieu's affairs he had fairly earned the esteem of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and numbered the best families among his clients; but he did not take advantage of his popularity, as an ambitious man might have done. The Vicomtesse would have had him sell his practice and enter the magistracy, in which career advancement would have been swift and certain with such influence at his disposal; but he persistently refused all offers. He only went into society to keep up his connections, but he occasionally spent an evening at the Hôtel de Grandlieu. It was a very lucky thing for him that his talents had been brought into the light by his devotion to Mme. de Grandlieu, for his practice otherwise might have gone to pieces. Derville had not an attorney's soul. Since Ernest de Restaud had appeared at the Hôtel de Grandlieu, and he had noticed that Camille felt attracted to the young man, Derville had been as assiduous in his visits as any dandy of the Chaussée-d'Antin newly admitted to the noble Faubourg. At a ball only a few days

before, when he happened to stand near Camille, and said, indicating the Count:

"It is a pity that yonder youngster has not two or three million francs, is it not?"

"Is it a pity? I do not think so," the girl answered. "M. de Restaud has plenty of ability; he is well educated, and the Minister, his chief, thinks well of him. He will be a remarkable man, I have no doubt. 'Yonder youngster' will have as much money as he wishes when he comes into power."

"Yes, but suppose that he were rich already?"

"Rich already?" repeated Camille, flushing red. "Why, all the girls in the room would be quarreling for him," she added, glancing at the quadrilles.

"And then," retorted the attorney, "Mlle. de Grandlieu might not be the one towards whom his eyes are always turned? That is what that red color means! You like him, do you not? Come, speak out."

Camille suddenly rose to go.

"She loves him," Derville thought.

Since that evening, Camille had been unwontedly attentive to the attorney, who approved of her liking for Ernest de Restaud. Hitherto, although she knew well that her family lay under great obligations to Derville, she had felt respect rather than real friendship for him, their relation was more a matter of politeness than of warmth of feeling; and by her manner, and by the tones of her voice, she had always made him sensible of the distance which socially lay between them. Gratitude is a charge upon the inheritance which the second generation is apt to repudiate.

"This adventure," Derville began after a pause, "brings the one romantic event in my life to my mind. You are laughing already," he went on; "it seems so ridiculous, doesn't it, that an attorney should speak of a romance in his life? But once I was five-and-twenty, like everybody else, and even then I had seen some queer things. I ought to begin at the beginning by telling you about some one whom it is

impossible that you should have known. The man in question was a usurer.

"Can you grasp a clear notion of that sallow, wan face of his? I wish the *Académie* would give me leave to dub such faces the *lunar* type. It was like silver-gilt, with the gilt rubbed off. His hair was iron-gray, sleek, and carefully combed; his features might have been cast in bronze; Talleyrand himself was not more impassive than this money-lender. A pair of little eyes, yellow as a ferret's, and with scarce an eyelash to them, peered out from under the sheltering peak of a shabby old cap, as if they feared the light. He had the thin lips that you see in Rembrandt's or Metsu's portraits of alchemists and shrunken old men, and a nose so sharp at the tip that it put you in mind of a gimlet. His voice was low; he always spoke suavely; he never flew into a passion. His age was a problem; it was hard to say whether he had grown old before his time, or whether by economy of youth he had saved enough to last him his life.

"This room, and everything in it, from the green baize of his bureau to the strip of carpet by the bed, was as clean and threadbare as the chilly sanctuary of some elderly spinster who spends her days in rubbing her furniture. In winter time, the live brands of the fire smouldered all day in a bank of ashes; there was never any flame in his grate. He went through his day, from his uprising to his evening coughing-fit, with the regularity of a pendulum, and in some sort was a clockwork man, wound up by a night's slumber. Touch a wood-louse on an excursion across your sheet of paper, and the creature shams death; and in something the same way my acquaintance would stop short in the middle of a sentence, while a cart went by, to save the strain to his voice. Following the example of Fontenelle, he was thrifty of pulse-strokes, and concentrated all human sensibility in the innermost sanctuary of Self.

"His life flowed soundless as the sands of an hour-glass. His victims sometimes flew into a rage and made a great deal

of noise, followed by a great silence; so is it in a kitchen after a fowl's neck has been wrung.

"Toward evening this bill of exchange incarnate would assume ordinary human shape, and his metals were metamorphosed into a human heart. When he was satisfied with his day's business, he would rub his hands; his inward glee would escape like smoke through every rift and wrinkle of his face;—in no other way is it possible to give an idea of the mute play of muscle which expressed sensations similar to the soundless laughter of *Leather Stocking*. Indeed, even in transports of joy, his conversation was confined to monosyllables; he wore the same non-committal countenance.

"This was the neighbor Chance found for me in the house in the Rue des Grès, where I used to live when as yet I was only a second clerk finishing my third year's studies. The house is damp and dark, and boasts no courtyard. All the windows look on the street; the whole dwelling, in claustral fashion, is divided into rooms or cells of equal size, all opening upon a long corridor dimly lit with borrowed lights. The place must have been part of an old convent once. So gloomy was it, that the gaiety of eldest sons forsook them on the stairs before they reached my neighbor's door. He and his house were much alike; even so does the oyster resemble his native rock.

"I was the one creature with whom he had any communication, socially speaking; he would come in to ask for a light, to borrow a book or a newspaper, and of an evening he would allow me to go into his cell, and when he was in the humor we would chat together. These marks of confidence were the results of four years of neighborhood and my own sober conduct. From sheer lack of pence, I was bound to live pretty much as he did. Had he any relations or friends? Was he rich or poor? Nobody could give an answer to these questions. I myself never saw money in his room. Doubtless his capital was safely stowed in the strong rooms of the Bank. He used to collect his bills himself as they fell due, running all over Paris on a pair of shanks as skinny as a stag's. On

occasion he could be a martyr to prudence. One day, when he happened to have gold in his pockets, a double napoleon worked its way, somehow or other, out of his fob and fell, and another lodger following him up the stairs picked up the coin and returned it to its owner.

"'That isn't mine!' said he, with a start of surprise. 'Mine indeed! If I were rich, should I live as I do!'

"He made his cup of coffee himself every morning on the cast-iron chafing dish which stood all day in the black angle of the grate; his dinner came in from a cookshop; and our old porter's wife went up at the prescribed hour to set his room in order. Finally, a whimsical chance, in which Sterne would have seen predestination, had named the man Gobseck. When I did business for him later, I came to know that he was about seventy-six years old at the time when we became acquainted. He was born about 1740, in some outlying suburb of Antwerp, of a Dutch father and a Jewish mother, and his name was Jean-Esther Van Gobseck. You remember how all Paris took an interest in that murder case, a woman named *La belle Hollandaise?* I happened to mention it to my old neighbor, and he answered without the slightest symptom of interest or surprise, 'She is my grandniece.'

"That was the only remark drawn from him by the death of his sole surviving next of kin, his sister's granddaughter. From reports of the case I found that *La belle Hollandaise* was in fact named Sara Van Gobseck. When I asked by what curious chance his grandniece came to bear his surname, he smiled:

"'The women never marry in our family.'

"Singular creature, he had never cared to find out a single relative among four generations counted on the female side. The thought of his heirs was abhorrent to him; and the idea that his wealth could pass into other hands after his death simply inconceivable.

"He was a child, ten years old, when his mother shipped him off as a cabin boy on a voyage to the Dutch Straits Settlements, and there he knocked about for twenty years. The

inscrutable lines on that sallow forehead kept the secret of horrible adventures, sudden panic, unhoped-for luck, romantic cross events, joys that knew no limit, hunger endured and love trampled under foot, fortunes risked, lost, and recovered, life endangered time and time again, and saved, it may be, by one of the rapid, ruthless decisions absolved by necessity. He had known Admiral Simeuse, M. de Lally, M. de Kergarouët, M. d'Estaing, *le Bailli de Suffren,* M. de Portenduère, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, Tippoo Sahib's father, Tippoo Sahib himself. The bully who served Mahadaji Sindhia, King of Delhi, and did so much to found the power of the Mahrattas, had had dealings with Gobseck. Long residence at St. Thomas brought him in contact with Victor Hughes and other notorious pirates. In his quest of fortune he had left no stone unturned; witness an attempt to discover the treasure of that tribe of savages so famous in Buenos Ayres and its neighborhood. He had a personal knowledge of the events of the American War of Independence. But if he spoke of the Indies or of America, as he did very rarely with me, and never with any one else, he seemed to regard it as an indiscretion and to repent of it afterwards. If humanity and sociability are in some sort a religion, Gobseck might be ranked as an infidel; but though I set myself to study him, I must confess, to my shame, that his real nature was impenetrable up to the very last. I even felt doubts at times as to his sex. If all usurers are like this one, I maintain that they belong to the neuter gender.

"Did he adhere to his mother's religion? Did he look on Gentiles as his legitimate prey? Had he turned Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mahometan, Brahmin, or what not? I never knew anything whatsoever about his religious opinions, and so far as I could see, he was indifferent rather than incredulous.

"One evening I went in to see this man who had turned himself to gold; the usurer, whom his victims (his clients, as he styled them) were wont to call Daddy Gobseck, perhaps ironically, perhaps by way of antiphrasis. He was sitting in

his armchair, motionless as a statue, staring fixedly at the mantel-shelf, where he seemed to read the figures of his statements. A lamp, with a pedestal that had once been green, was burning in the room; but so far from taking color from its smoky light, his face seemed to stand out positively paler against the background. He pointed to a chair set for me, but not a word did he say.

"'What thoughts can this being have in his mind?' said I to myself. 'Does he know that a God exists; does he know there are such things as feeling, woman, happiness?' I pitied him as I might have pitied a diseased creature. But, at the same time, I knew quite well that while he had millions of francs at his command, he possessed the world no less in idea—that world which he had explored, ransacked, weighed, appraised, and exploited.

"'Good day, Daddy Gobseck,' I began.

"He turned his face towards me, with a slight contraction of his bushy, black eyebrows; this characteristic shade of expression in him meant as much as the most jubilant smile on a Southern face.

"'You look just as gloomy as you did that day when the news came of the failure of that bookseller whose sharpness you admired so much, though you were one of his victims.'

"'One of his victims?' he repeated, with a look of astonishment.

"'Yes. Did you not refuse to accept composition at the meeting of creditors until he undertook privately to pay you your debt in full; and did he not give you bills accepted by the insolvent firm; and then, when he set up in business again, did he not pay you the dividend upon those bills of yours, signed as they were by the bankrupt firm?'

"'He was a sharp one, but I had it out of him.'

"'Then have you some bills to protest? To-day is the 30th, I believe.'

"It was the first time that I had spoken to him of money. He looked ironically up at me; then in those bland accents, not unlike the husky tones which the tyro draws from a flute, he answered, 'I am amusing myself.'

" 'So you amuse yourself now and again?'

" 'Do you imagine that the only poets in the world are those who print their verses?' he asked, with a pitying look and shrug of the shoulders.

" 'Poetry in that head!' thought I, for as yet I knew nothing of his life.

" 'What life could be as glorious as mine?' he continued, and his eyes lighted up. 'You are young, your mental visions are colored by youthful blood, you see women's faces in the fire, while I see nothing but coals in mine. You have all sorts of beliefs, while I have no beliefs at all. Keep your illusions—if you can. Now I will show you life with the discount taken off. Go wherever you like, or stay at home by the fire-side with your wife, there always comes a time when you settle down in a certain groove, the groove of your preference; and then happiness consists in the exercise of your faculties by applying them to realities. Anything more in the way of precept is false. My principles have been various, among various men; I had to change them with every change of latitude. Things that we admire in Europe are punishable in Asia, and a vice in Paris becomes a necessity when you have passed the Azores. There are no such things as hard-and-fast rules; there are only conventions adapted to the climate. Fling a man headlong into one social melting pot after another, and convictions and forms and moral systems become so many meaningless words to him. The one thing that always remains, the one sure instinct that nature has implanted in us, is the instinct of self-preservation. In European society you call this instinct self-interest. If you had lived as long as I have, you would know that there is but one concrete reality invariable enough to be worth caring about, and that is—GOLD. Gold represents every form of human power. I have traveled. I found out that there were either hills or plains everywhere: the plains are monotonous, the hills a weariness; consequently, place may be left out of the question. As to manners; man is man all the world over. The same battle between the poor and the rich is going on

everywhere; it is inevitable everywhere; consequently, it is better to exploit than to be exploited. Everywhere you find the man of thews and sinews who toils, and the lymphatic man who torments himself; and pleasures are everywhere the same, for when all sensations are exhausted, all that survives is Vanity—Vanity is the abiding substance of us, the *I* in us. Vanity is only to be satisfied by gold in floods. Our dreams need time and physical means and painstaking thought before they can be realized. Well, gold contains all things in embryo; gold realizes all things for us.

"'None but fools and invalids can find pleasure in shuffling cards all evening long to find out whether they shall win a few pence at the end. None but driveling idiots could spend time in inquiring into all that is happening around them, whether Madame Such-an-One slept single on her couch or in company, whether she has more blood than lymph, more temperament than virtue. None but the dupes, who fondly imagine that they are useful to their like, can interest themselves in laying down rules for political guidance amid events which neither they nor any one else foresees, nor ever will foresee. None but simpletons can delight in talking about stage players and repeating their sayings; making the daily promenade of a caged animal over a rather larger area; dressing for others, eating for others, priding themselves on a horse or a carriage such as no neighbor can have until three days later. What is all this but Parisian life summed up in a few phrases? Let us find a higher outlook on life than theirs. Happiness consists either in strong emotions which drain our vitality, or in methodical occupation which makes existence like a bit of English machinery, working with the regularity of clockwork. A higher happiness than either consists in a curiosity, styled noble, a wish to learn Nature's secrets, or to attempt by artificial means to imitate Nature to some extent. What is this in two words but Science and Art, or passion or calm?—Ah! well, every human passion wrought up to its highest pitch in the struggle for existence comes to parade itself here before me—as I live in calm. As

for your scientific curiosity, a kind of wrestling bout in which man is never uppermost, I replace it by an insight into all the springs of action in man and woman. To sum up, the world is mine without effort of mine, and the world has not the slightest hold on me. Listen to this,' he went on, 'I will tell you the history of my morning, and you will divine my pleasures.'

"He got up, pushed the bolt of the door, drew a tapestry curtain across it with a sharp grating sound of the rings on the rod, then he sat down again.

" 'This morning,' he said, 'I had only two amounts to collect; the rest of the bills that were due I gave away instead of cash to my customers yesterday. So much saved, you see, for when I discount a bill I always deduct two francs for a hired brougham—expenses of collection. A pretty thing it would be, would it not, if my clients were to set *me* trudging all over Paris for half-a-dozen francs of discount, when no man is my master, and I only pay seven francs in the shape of taxes?

" 'The first bill for a thousand francs was presented by a young fellow, a smart buck with a spangled waistcoat, and an eyeglass, and a tilbury and an English horse, and all the rest of it. The bill bore the signature of one of the prettiest women in Paris, married to a Count, a great landowner. Now, how came that Countess to put her name to a bill of exchange, legally not worth the paper it was written upon, but practically very good business; for these women, poor things, are afraid of the scandal that a protested bill makes in a family, and would give themselves away in payment sooner than fail? I wanted to find out what that bill of exchange really represented. Was it stupidity, imprudence, love, or charity?

" 'The second bill, bearing the signature "Fanny Malvaut," came to me from a linen-draper on the highway to bankruptcy. Now, no creature who has any credit with a bank comes to *me*. The first step to my door means that a man is desperately hard up; that the news of his failure will soon

come out: and, most of all, it means that he has been everywhere else first. The stag is always at bay when I see him, and a pack of creditors are hard upon his track. The Countess lived in the Rue du Helder, and my Fanny in the Rue Montmartre. How many conjectures I made as I set out this morning! If these two women were not able to pay, they would show me more respect than they would show their own fathers. What tricks and grimaces would not the Countess try for a thousand francs! She would be so nice to me, she would talk to me in that ingratiating tone peculiar to endorsers of bills, she would pour out a torrent of coaxing words, perhaps she would beg and pray, and I . . .' (here the old man turned his pale eyes upon me—'and I not to be moved, inexorable!' he continued. 'I am there as the avenger, the apparition of Remorse. So much for hypotheses. I reached the house.

"'"Madame la Comtesse is asleep," says the maid.

"'"When can I see her?"

"'"At twelve o'clock."

"'"Is Madame la Comtesse ill?"

"'"No, sir, but she only came home at three o'clock this morning from a ball."

"'"My name is Gobseck, tell her that I shall call again at twelve o'clock," and out I went, leaving traces of my muddy boots on the carpet which covered the paved staircase. I like to leave mud on a rich man's carpet; it is not petty spite; I like to make them feel a touch of the claws of Necessity. In the Rue Montmartre I thrust open the old gateway of a poor-looking house, and looked into a dark courtyard where the sunlight never shines. The porter's lodge was grimy, the window looked like the sleeve of some shabby wadded gown—greasy, dirty, and full of holes.

"'"Mlle. Fanny Malvaut?"

"'"She has gone out; but if you have come about a bill, the money is waiting for you."

"'"I will look in again," said I.

"'As soon as I knew that the porter had the money for

me, I wanted to know what the girl was like; I pictured her as pretty. The rest of the morning I spent in looking at the prints in the shop windows along the boulevard; then, just as it struck twelve, I went through the Countess' antechamber.

"' "Madame has just this minute rung for me," said the maid; "I don't think she can see you yet."

"' "I will wait," said I, and sat down in an easy-chair.

"'Venetian shutters were opened, and presently the maid came hurrying back.

"' "Come in, sir."

"'From the sweet tone of the girl's voice, I knew that the mistress could not be ready to pay. What a handsome woman it was that I saw in another moment! She had flung an Indian shawl hastily over her bare shoulders, covering herself with it completely, while it revealed the bare outlines of the form beneath. She wore a loose gown trimmed with snowy ruffles, which told plainly that her laundress' bills amounted to something like two thousand francs in the course of a year. Her dark curls escaped from beneath a bright Indian handkerchief, knotted carelessly about her head after the fashion of Creole women. The bed lay in disorder that told of broken slumber. A painter would have paid money to stay a while to see the scene that I saw. Under the luxurious hanging draperies, the pillow, crushed into the depths of an eider-down quilt, its lace border standing out in contrast against the background of blue silk, bore a vague impress that kindled the imagination. A pair of satin slippers gleamed from the great bear-skin rug spread by the carved mahogany lions at the bed-foot, where she had flung them off in her weariness after the ball. A crumpled gown hung over a chair, the sleeves touching the floor; stockings which a breath would have blown away were twisted about the leg of an easy-chair; while ribbon garters straggled over a settee. A fan of price, half unfolded, glittered on the chimney-piece. Drawers stood open; flowers, diamonds, gloves, a bouquet, a girdle, were littered about. The room

was full of vague sweet perfume. And—beneath all the luxury and disorder, beauty and incongruity, I saw Misery crouching in wait for her or for her adorer, Misery rearing its head, for the Countess had begun to feel the edge of those fangs. Her tired face was an epitome of the room strewn with relics of past festival. The scattered gewgaws, pitiable this morning, when gathered together and coherent, had turned heads the night before.

"'What efforts to drink of the Tantalus cup of bliss I could read in these traces of love stricken by the thunderbolt remorse—in this visible presentment of a life of luxury, extravagance, and riot. There were faint red marks on her young face, signs of the fineness of the skin; but her features were coarsened, as it were, and the circles about her eyes were unwontedly dark. Nature nevertheless was so vigorous in her, that these traces of past folly did not spoil her beauty. Her eyes glittered. She looked like some *Herodias* of da Vinci's (I have dealt in pictures), so magnificently full of life and energy was she; there was nothing starved nor stinted in feature or outline; she awakened desire; it seemed to me that there was some passion in her yet stronger than love. I was taken with her. It was a long while since my heart had throbbed; so I was paid then and there—for I would give a thousand francs for a sensation that should bring me back memories of youth.

"'"Monsieur," she said, finding a chair for me, "will you be so good as to wait?"

"'"Until this time to-morrow, madame," I said, folding up the bill again. "I cannot legally protest this bill any sooner." And within myself I said—"Pay the price of your luxury, pay for your name, pay for your ease, pay for the monopoly which you enjoy! The rich have invented judges and courts of law to secure their goods, and the guillotine—that candle in which so many an ignorant moth burns his wings. But for you who lie in silk, under silken coverlets, there is remorse, and grinding of teeth beneath a smile, and those fantastical lions' jaws are gaping to set their fangs in your heart."

" ' "Protest the bill! Can you mean it?" she cried, with her eyes upon me; "could you have so little consideration for me?"

" ' "If the King himself owed money to me, madame, and did not pay it, I should summons him even sooner than any other debtor."

" 'While we were speaking, somebody tapped gently at the door.

" ' "I cannot see any one," she cried imperiously.

" ' "But, Anastasie, I particularly wish to speak to you."

" ' "Not just now, dear," she answered in a milder tone, but with no sign of relenting.

" ' "What nonsense! You are talking to some one," said the voice, and in came a man who could only be the Count.

" 'The Countess gave me a glance. I saw how it was. She was thoroughly in my power. There was a time, when I was young, and might perhaps have been stupid enough not to protest the bill. At Pondicherry, in 1763, I let a woman off, and nicely she paid me out afterwards. I deserved it; what call was there for me to trust her?

" ' "What does this gentleman want?" asked the Count.

" 'I could see that the Countess was trembling from head to foot; the white satin skin of her throat was rough, "turned to goose flesh," to use the familiar expression. As for me, I laughed in myself without moving a muscle.

" ' "This gentleman is one of my tradesmen," she said.

" 'The Count turned his back on me; I drew the bill half out of my pocket. After that inexorable movement, she came over to me and put a diamond into my hands. "Take it," she said, "and be gone."

" 'We exchanged values, and I made my bow and went. The diamond was quite worth twelve hundred francs to me. Out in the courtyard I saw a swarm of flunkeys, brushing their liveries, waxing their boots, and cleaning sumptuous equipages.

" ' "This is what brings these people to me!" said I to myself. "It is to keep up this kind of thing that they steal

millions with all due formalities, and betray their country. The great lord, and the little man who apes the great lord, bathes in mud once for all to save himself a splash or two when he goes afoot through the streets."

"'Just then the great gates were opened to admit a cabriolet. It was the same young fellow who had brought the bill to me.

"'"Sir," I said, as he alighted, "here are two hundred francs, which I beg you to return to Mme. la Comtesse, and have the goodness to tell her that I hold the pledge which she deposited with me this morning at her disposition for a week."

"'He took the two hundred francs, and an ironical smile stole over his face; it was as if he had said, "Aha! so she has paid it, has she? . . . Faith, so much the better!" I read the Countess' future in his face. That good-looking, fair-haired young gentleman is a heartless gambler; he will ruin himself, ruin her, ruin her husband, ruin the children, eat up their portions, and work more havoc in Parisian salons than a whole battery of howitzers in a regiment.

"'I went back to see Mlle. Fanny in the Rue Montmartre, climbed a very steep, narrow staircase, and reached a two-roomed dwelling on the fifth floor. Everything was as neat as a new ducat. I did not see a speck of dust on the furniture in the first room, where Mlle. Fanny was sitting. Mlle. Fanny herself was a young Parisian girl, quietly dressed, with a delicate fresh face, and a winning look. The arrangement of her neatly brushed chestnut hair in a double curve on her forehead lent a refined expression to blue eyes, clear as crystal. The broad daylight streaming in through the short curtains against the window pane fell with softened light on her girlish face. A pile of shaped pieces of linen told me that she was a sempstress. She looked like a spirit of solitude. When I held out the bill, I remarked that she had not been at home when I called in the morning.

"'"But the money was left with the porter's wife," said she.

"'I pretended not to understand.

"'"You go out early, mademoiselle, it seems."

"'"I very seldom leave my room; but when you work all night, you are obliged to take a bath sometimes."

"'I looked at her. A glance told me all about her life. Here was a girl condemned by misfortune to toil, a girl who came of honest farmer folk, for she had still a freckle or two that told of country birth. There was an indefinable atmosphere of goodness about her; I felt as if I were breathing sincerity and frank innocence. It was refreshing to my lungs. Poor innocent child, she had faith in something; there was a crucifix and a sprig or two of green box above her poor little painted wooden bedstead; I felt touched, or somewhat inclined that way. I felt ready to offer to charge no more than twelve per cent, and so give something towards establishing her in a good way of business.

"'"But maybe she has a little youngster of a cousin," I said to myself, "who would raise money on her signature and sponge on the poor girl."

"'So I went away, keeping my generous impulses well under control; for I have frequently had occasion to observe that when benevolence does no harm to him who gives, it is the ruin of him who takes. When you came in I was thinking that Fanny Malvaut would make a nice little wife; I was thinking of the contrast between her pure, lonely life and the life of the Countess—she has sunk as low as a bill of exchange already, she will sink to the lowest depths of degradation before she has done!'—I scrutinized him during the deep silence that followed, but in a moment he spoke again. 'Well,' he said, 'do you think that it is nothing to have this power of insight into the deepest recesses of the human heart, to embrace so many lives, to see the naked truth underlying it all? There are no two dramas alike: there are hideous sores, deadly chagrins, love scenes, misery that soon will lie under the ripples of the Seine, young men's joys that lead to the scaffold, the laughter of despair, and sumptuous banquets. Yesterday it was a tragedy. A worthy

soul of a father drowned himself because he could not support his family. To-morrow is a comedy; some youngster will try to rehearse the scene of M. Dimanche, brought up to date. You have heard people extol the eloquence of our latter day preachers; now and again I have wasted my time by going to hear them; they produced a change in my opinions, but in my conduct (as somebody said, I can't recollect his name), in my conduct—never!—Well, well; these good priests and your Mirabeaus and Vergniauds and the rest of them, are mere stammering beginners compared with these orators of mine.

"'Often it is some girl in love, some gray-headed merchant on the verge of bankruptcy, some mother with a son's wrongdoing to conceal, some starving artist, some great man whose influence is on the wane, and, for lack of money, is like to lose the fruit of all his labors—the power of their pleading has made me shudder. Sublime actors such as these play for me, for an audience of one, and they cannot deceive me. I can look into their inmost thoughts, and read them as God reads them. Nothing is hidden from me. Nothing is refused to the holder of the purse-strings to loose and to bind. I am rich enough to buy the consciences of those who control the action of ministers, from their office boys to their mistresses. Is not that power?—I can possess the fairest women, receive their softest caresses; is not that Pleasure? And is not your whole social economy summed up in terms of Power and Pleasure?

"'There are ten of us in Paris, silent, unknown kings, the arbiters of your destinies. What is life but a machine set in motion by money? Know this for certain—methods are always confounded with results; you will never succeed in separating the soul from the senses, spirit from matter. Gold is the spiritual basis of existing society.—The ten of us are bound by the ties of common interest; we meet on certain days of the week at the Café Thémis near the Pont Neuf, and there, in conclave, we reveal the mysteries of finance. No fortune can deceive us; we are in possession of family

secrets in all directions. We keep a kind of Black Book, in which we note the most important bills issued, drafts on public credit, or on banks, or given and taken in the course of business. We are the Casuists of the Paris Bourse, a kind of Inquisition weighing and analyzing the most insignificant actions of every man of any fortune, and our forecasts are infallible. One of us looks out over the judicial world, one over the financial, another surveys the administrative, and yet another the business world. I myself keep an eye on eldest sons, artists, people in the great world, and gamblers—on the most sensational side of Paris. Every one who comes to us lets us into his neighbor's secrets. Thwarted passion and mortified vanity are great babblers. Vice and disappointment and vindictiveness are the best of all detectives. My colleagues, like myself, have enjoyed all things, are sated with all things, and have reached the point when power and money are loved for their own sake.

"'Here,' he said, indicating his bare, chilly room, 'here the most high-mettled gallant, who chafes at a word and draws swords for a syllable elsewhere, will entreat with clasped hands. There is no city merchant so proud, no woman so vain of her beauty, no soldier of so bold a spirit, but that they entreat me here, one and all, with tears of rage or anguish in their eyes. Here they kneel—the famous artist, and the man of letters, whose name will go down to posterity. Here, in short' (he lifted his hand to his forehead), 'all the inheritances and all the concerns of all Paris are weighed in the balance. Are you still of the opinion that there are no delights behind the blank mask which so often has amazed you by its impassiveness?' he asked, stretching out that livid face which reeked of money.

"I went back to my room, feeling stupefied. The little, wizened old man had grown great. He had been metamorphosed under my eyes into a strange visionary symbol; he had come to be the power of gold personified. I shrank, shuddering, from life and my kind.

"'Is it really so?' I thought; 'must everything be resolved into gold?'

"I remember that it was long before I slept that night. I saw heaps of gold all about me. My thoughts were full of the lovely Countess; I confess, to my shame, that the vision completely eclipsed another quiet, innocent figure, the figure of the woman who had entered upon a life of toil and obscurity; but on the morrow, through the clouds of slumber, Fanny's sweet face rose before me in all its beauty, and I thought of nothing else."

"Will you take a glass of *eau sucrée?*" asked the Vicomtesse, interrupting Derville.

"I should be glad of it."

"But I can see nothing in this that can touch our concerns," said Mme. de Grandlieu, as she rang the bell.

"Sardanapalus!" cried Derville, flinging out his favorite invocation. "Mademoiselle Camille will be wide awake in a moment if I say that her happiness depended not so long ago upon Daddy Gobseck; but as the old gentleman died at the age of ninety, M. de Restaud will soon be in possession of a handsome fortune. This requires some explanation. As for Fanny Malvaut, you know her; she is my wife."

"Poor fellow, he would admit that, with his usual frankness, with a score of people to hear him!" said the Vicomtesse.

"I would proclaim it to the universe," said the attorney.

"Go on, drink your glass, my poor Derville. You will never be anything but the happiest and the best of men."

"I left you in the Rue du Helder," remarked the uncle, raising his face after a gentle doze. "You had gone to see a Countess; what have you done with her?"

"A few days after my conversation with the old Dutchman," Derville continued, "I sent in my thesis, and became first a licentiate in law, and afterwards an advocate. The old miser's opinion of me went up considerably. He consulted me (gratuitously) on all the ticklish bits of business which he undertook when he had made quite sure how he stood, business which would have seemed unsafe to any or-

dinary practitioner. This man, over whom no one appeared to have the slightest influence, listened to my advice with something like repect. It is true that he always found that it turned out very well.

"At length I became head-clerk in the office where I had worked for three years and then I left the Rue des Grès for rooms in my employer's house. I had my board and lodging and a hundred and fifty francs per month. It was a great day for me!

"When I went to bid the usurer good-bye, he showed no sign of feeling, he was neither cordial nor sorry to lose me, he did not ask me to come to see him, and only gave me one of those glances which seemed in some sort to reveal a power of second-sight.

"By the end of a week my old neighbor came to see me with a tolerably thorny bit of business, an expropriation, and he continued to ask my advice with as much freedom as if he paid for it.

"My principal was a man of pleasure and expensive tastes; before the second year (1818-1819) was out he had got himself into difficulties, and was obliged to sell his practice. A professional connection in those days did not fetch the present exorbitant prices, and my principal asked a hundred and fifty thousand francs. Now an active man, of competent knowledge and intelligence, might hope to pay off the capital in ten years, paying interest and living respectably in the meantime—if he could command confidence. But I was the seventh child of a small tradesman at Noyon, I had not a sou to my name, nor personal knowledge of any capitalist but Daddy Gobseck. An ambitious idea, and an indefinable glimmer of hope, put heart into me. To Gobseck I betook myself, and slowly one evening I made my way to the Rue des Grès. My heart thumped heavily as I knocked at his door in the gloomy house. I recollected all the things that he used to tell me, at a time when I myself was very far from suspecting the violence of the anguish awaiting those who crossed his threshold. Now it was I who was about to beg and pray like so many others.

" 'Well, no, not *that,*' I said to myself; 'an honest man must keep his self-respect wherever he goes. Success is not worth cringing for; let us show him a front as decided as his own.'

"Daddy Gobseck had taken my room since I left the house, so as to have no neighbor; he had made a little grated window too in his door since then, and did not open until he had taken a look at me and saw who I was.

" 'Well,' said he, in his thin, flute notes, 'so your principal is selling his practice?'

" 'How did you know that?' said I; 'he has not spoken of it as yet except to me.'

"The old man's lips were drawn in puckers, like a curtain, to either corner of his mouth, as a soundless smile bore a hard glance company.

" 'Nothing else would have brought you here,' he said drily, after a pause, which I spent in confusion.

" 'Listen to me, M. Gobseck,' I began, with such serenity as I could assume before the old man, who gazed at me with steady eyes. There was a clear light burning in them that disconcerted me.

"He made a gesture as if to bid me 'Go on.' 'I know that it is not easy to work on your feelings, so I will not waste my eloquence on the attempt to put my position before you—I am a penniless clerk, with no one to look to but you, and no heart in the world but yours can form a clear idea of my probable future. Let us leave hearts out of the question. Business is business, and business is not carried on with sentimentality like romances. Now to the facts. My principal's practice is worth in his hands about twenty thousand francs per annum; in my hands, I think it would bring in forty thousand. He is willing to sell it for a hundred and fifty thousand francs. And *here,*' I said, striking my forehead, 'I feel that if you would lend me the purchase-money, I could clear it off in ten years' time.'

" 'Come, that is plain speaking," said Daddy Gobseck, and he held out his hand and grasped mine. 'Nobody since

I have been in business has stated the motives of his visit more clearly. Guarantees?' asked he, scanning me from head to foot. 'None to give,' he added after a pause. 'How old are you?'

"Twenty-five in ten days' time,' said I, 'or I could not open the matter.'

"'Precisely.'

"'Well?'

"'It is possible.'

"'My word, we must be quick about it, or I shall have some one buying over my head.'

"'Bring your certificate of birth round to-morrow morning, and we will talk. I will think it over.'

"'Next morning, at eight o'clock, I stood in the old man's room. He took the document, put on his spectacles, coughed, spat, wrapped himself up in his black greatcoat, and read the whole certificate through from beginning to end. Then he turned it over and over, looked at me, coughed again, fidgeted about in his chair, and said, 'We will try to arrange this bit of business.'

"I trembled.

"'I make fifty per cent on my capital,' he continued, 'sometimes I make a hundred, two hunderd, five hundred per cent.'

"I turned pale at the words.

"'But as we are acquaintances, I shall be satisfied to take twelve and a half per cent per'—(he hesitated)—'well, yes, from you I would be content to take thirteen per cent per annum. Will that suit you?'

"'Yes,' I answered.

"'But if it is too much, stick up for yourself, Grotius!' (a name he jokingly gave me). 'When I ask you for thirteen per cent, it is all in the way of business; look into it, see if you can pay it; I don't like a man to agree too easily. Is it too much?'

"'No,' said I, 'I will make up for it by working a little harder.'

"'Gad! your clients will pay for it!' said he, looking at me wickedly out of the corner of his eyes.

"'No, by all the devils in hell!' cried I, 'it shall be I who will pay. I would sooner cut my hand off than flay people.'

"'Good-night,' said Daddy Gobseck.

"'Why, fees are all according to scale,' I added.

"'Not for compromises and settlements out of Court, and cases where litigants come to terms,' said he. 'You can send in a bill for thousands of francs, six thousand even at a swoop (it depends on the importance of the case), for conferences with So-and-so, and expenses, and drafts, and memorials, and your jargon. A man must learn to look out for business of this kind. I will recommend you as a most competent, clever attorney. I will send you such a lot of work of this sort that your colleagues will be fit to burst with envy. Werbrust, Palma, and Gigonnet, my cronies, shall hand over their expropriations to you; they have plenty of them, the Lord knows! So you will have two practices—the one you are buying, and the other I will build up for you. You ought almost to pay me fifteen per cent on my loan.'

"'So be it, but no more,' said I, with the firmness which means that a man is determined not to concede another point.

"Daddy Gobseck's face relaxed; he looked pleased with me.

"'I shall pay the money over to your principal myself,' said he, 'so as to establish a lien on the purchase and caution-money.'

"'Oh, anything you like in the way of guarantees.'

"'And besides that, you will give me bills for the amount made payable to a third party (name left blank), fifteen bills of ten thousand francs each.'

"'Well, so long as it is acknowledged in writing that this is a double——'

"'No!' Gobseck broke in upon me. 'No! Why should I trust you any more than you trust me?'

"I kept silence.

"'And furthermore,' he continued, with a sort of good humor, 'you will give me your advice without charging fees as long as I live, will you not?'

"'So be it; so long as there is no outlay.'

"'Precisely,' said he. 'Ah, by the by, you will allow me to go to see you?' (Plainly the old man found it not so easy to assume the air of good-humor.)

"'I shall always be glad.'

"'Ah! yes, but it would be very difficult to arrange of a morning. You will have your affairs to attend to, and I have mine.'

"'Then come in the evening.'

"'Oh, no!' he answered briskly, 'you ought to go into society and see your clients, and I myself have my friends at my café.'

"'His friends!' thought I to myself.—'Very well,' said I, 'why not come at dinner-time?'

"'That is the time,' said Gobseck, 'after 'Change, at five o'clock. Good, you will see me Wednesdays and Saturdays. We will talk over business like a pair of friends. Aha! I am gay sometimes. Just give me the wing of a partridge and a glass of champagne, and we will have our chat together. I know a great many things that can be told now at this distance of time; I will teach you to know men, and what is more—women!'

"'Oh! a partridge and a glass of champagne if you like.'

"'Don't do anything foolish, or I shall lose my faith in you. And don't set up housekeeping in a grand way. Just one old general servant. I will come and see that you keep your health. I have capital invested in your head, he! he! so I am bound to look after you. There, come round in the evening and bring your principal with you!'

"'Would you mind telling me, if there is no harm in asking, what was the good of my birth certificate in this business?' I asked, when the little old man and I stood on the doorstep.

"Jean-Esther Van Gobseck shrugged his shoulders, smiled

maliciously, and said, 'What blockheads youngsters are! Learn, master attorney (for learn you must if you don't mean to be taken in), that integrity and brains in a man under thirty are commodities which can be mortgaged. After that age there is no counting on a man.'

"And with that he shut the door.

"Three months later I was an attorney. Before very long, madame, it was my good fortune to undertake the suit for the recovery of your estates. I won the day, and my name became known. In spite of the exorbitant rate of interest, I paid off Gobseck in less than five years. I married Fanny Malvaut, whom I loved with all my heart. There was a parallel between her life and mine, between our hard work and our luck, which increased the strength of feeling on either side. One of her uncles, a well-to-do farmer, died and left her seventy thousand francs, which helped to clear off the loan. From that day my life has been nothing but happiness and prosperity. Nothing is more utterly uninteresting than a happy man, so let us say no more on that head, and return to the rest of the characters.

"About a year after the purchase of the practice, I was dragged into a bachelor breakfast-party given by one of our number who had lost a bet to a young man greatly in vogue in the fashionable world. M. de Trailles, the flower of the dandyism of that day, enjoyed a prodigious reputation."

"But he is still enjoying it," put in the Comte de Born. "No one wears his clothes with a finer air, nor drives a tandem with a better grace. It is Maxime's gift; he can gamble, eat, and drink more gracefully than any man in the world. He is a judge of horses, hats, and pictures. All the women lose their heads over him. He always spends something like a hundred thousand francs a year, and no creature can discover that he has an acre of land or a single dividend warrant. The typical knight errant of our salons, our boudoirs, our boulevards, an amphibian half-way between a man and

a woman—Maxime de Trailles is a singular being, fit for anything, and good for nothing, quite as capable of perpetrating a benefit as of planning a crime; sometimes base, sometimes noble, more often bespattered with mire than besprinkled with blood, knowing more of anxiety than of remorse, more concerned with his digestion than with any mental process, shamming passion, feeling nothing. Maxime de Trailles is a brilliant link between the hulks and the best society; he belongs to the eminently intelligent class from which a Mirbeau, or a Pitt, or a Richelieu springs at times, though it is more wont to produce Counts of Horn, Fouqueir-Tinvilles, and Coignards."

"Well," pursued Derville, when he had heard the Vicomtesse's brother to the end, "I had heard a good deal about this individual from poor old Goriot, a client of mine; and I had already been at some pains to avoid the dangerous honor of his acquaintance, for I came across him sometimes in society. Still, my chum was so pressing about this breakfast-party of his, that I could not well get out of it, unless I wished to earn a name for squeamishness. Madame, you could hardly imagine what a bachelor's breakfast-party is like. It means superb display and a studied refinement seldom seen; the luxury of a miser when vanity leads him to be sumptuous for a day.

"You are surprised as you enter the room at the neatness of the table, dazzling by reason of its silver and crystal and linen damask. Life is here in full bloom; the young fellows are graceful to behold; they smile and talk in low, demure voices like so many brides; everything about them looks girlish. Two hours later you might take the room for a battlefield after the fight. Broken glasses, serviettes crumpled and torn to rags lie strewn about among the nauseous-looking remnants of food on the dishes. There is an uproar that stuns you, jesting toasts, a fire of witticisms and bad jokes; faces are empurpled, eyes inflamed and expressionless; unintentional confidences tell you the whole truth. Bottles are smashed, and songs trolled out in the height of a

diabolical racket; men call each other out, hang on each other's necks, or fall to fisticuffs; the room is full of a horrid, close scent made up of a hundred odors, and noise enough for a hundred voices. No one has any notion of what he is eating or drinking or saying. Some are depressed, others babble; one will turn monomaniac, repeating the same word over and over again like a bell set jangling; another tries to keep the tumult within bounds; the steadiest will propose an orgy. If any one in possession of his faculties should come in, he would think that he had interrupted a Bacchanalian rite.

"It was in the thick of such a chaos that M. de Trailles tried to insinuate himself into my good graces. My head was fairly clear, I was upon my guard. As for him, though he pretended to be decently drunk, he was perfectly cool, and knew very well what he was about. How it was done I do not know, but the upshot of it was that when we left Grignon's rooms about nine o'clock in the evening, M. de Trailles had thoroughly bewitched me. I had given him my promise that I would introduce him the next day to our Papa Gobseck. The words 'honor,' 'virtue,' 'countess,' 'honest woman,' and 'ill-luck' were mingled in his discourse with magical potency, thanks to that golden tongue of his.

"When I awoke next morning, and tried to recollect what I had done the day before, it was with great difficulty that I could make a connected tale from my impressions. At last, it seemed to me that the daughter of one of my clients was in danger of losing her reputation, together with her husband's love and esteem, if she could not get fifty thousand francs together in the course of the morning. There had been gaming debts, and carriage-builders' accounts, money lost to Heaven knows whom. My magician of a boon companion had impressed it upon me that she was rich enough to make good these reverses by a few years of economy. But only now did I begin to guess the reasons of his urgency. I confess, to my shame, that I had not the shadow of a doubt but that it was a matter of importance that Daddy Gobseck

should make it up with this dandy. I was dressing when the young gentleman appeared.

"'M. le Comte,' said I, after the usual greetings, 'I fail to see why you should need me to effect an introduction to Van Gobseck, the most civil and smooth-spoken of capitalists. Money will be forthcoming if he has any, or rather, if you can give him adequate security.'

"'Monsieur,' said he, 'it does not enter into my thoughts to force you to do me a service, even though you have passed your word.'

"'Sardanapalus!' said I to myself, 'am I going to let that fellow imagine that I will not keep my word with him?'

"'I had the honor of telling you yesterday,' said he, 'that I had fallen out with Daddy Gobseck most inopportunely; and as there is scarcely another man in Paris who can come down on the nail with a hundred thousand francs, at the end of the month, I begged of you to make my peace with him. But let us say no more about it——'

"M. de Trailles looked at me with civil insult in his expression, and made as if he would take his leave.

"'I am ready to go with you,' said I.

"When we reached the Rue des Grès, my dandy looked about him with a circumspection and uneasiness that set me wondering. His face grew livid, flushed, and yellow, turn and turn about, and by the time that Gobseck's door came in sight the perspiration stood in drops on his forehead. We were just getting out of the cabriolet, when a hackney cab turned into the street. My companion's hawk eye detected a woman in the depths of the vehicle. His face lighted up with a gleam of almost savage joy; he called to a little boy who was passing, and gave him his horse to hold. Then we went up to the old bill discounter.

"M. Gobseck,' said I, 'I have brought one of my most intimate friends to see you (whom I trust as I would trust the Devil,' I added for the old man's private ear). 'To oblige me you will do your best for him (at the ordinary rate), and pull him out of his difficulty (if it suits your convenience).'

"M. de Trailles made his bow to Gobseck, took a seat, and listened to us with a courtier-like attitude; its charming humility would have touched your heart to see, but my Gobseck sits in his chair by the fireside without moving a muscle, or changing a feature. He looked very like the statue of Voltaire under the peristyle of the Théâtre-Français, as you see it of an evening; he had partly risen as if to bow, and the skull cap that covered the top of his head, and the narrow strip of sallow forehead exhibited, completed his likeness to the man of marble.

" 'I have no money to spare except for my own clients,' said he.

" 'So you are cross because I may have tried in other quarters to ruin myself?' laughed the Count.

" 'Ruin yourself!' repeated Gobseck ironically.

" 'Were you about to remark that it is impossible to ruin a man who has nothing?' inquired the dandy. 'Why, I defy you to find a better *stock* in Paris!' he cried, swinging round on his heels.

"This half-earnest buffoonery produced not the slightest effect upon Gobseck.

" 'Am I not on intimate terms with the Ronquerolles, the Marsays, the Franchessinis, the two Vandenesses, the Ajuda-Pintos,—all the most fashionable young men in Paris, in short? A prince and an ambassador (you know them both) are my partners at play. I draw my revenues from London and Carlsbad and Baden and Bath. Is not this the most brilliant of all industries!'

" 'True.'

" 'You make a sponge of me, begad! you do. You encourage me to go and swell myself out in society, so that you can squeeze me when I am hard up; but you yourselves are sponges, just as I am, and death will give you a squeeze some day.'

" 'That is possible.'

" 'If there were no spendthrifts, what would become of you. The pair of us are like soul and body.'

" 'Precisely so.'

" 'Come, now, give us your hand, Grandaddy Gobseck, and be magnanimous if this is "true" and "possible" and "precisely so." '

" 'You come to me,' the usurer answered coldly, 'because Girard, Palma, Werbrust, and Gigonnet are full up of your paper; they are offering it at a loss of fifty per cent; and as it is likely they only gave you half the figure on the face of the bills, they are not worth five-and-twenty per cent of their supposed value. I am your most obedient! Can I in common decency lend a stiver to a man who owes thirty thousand francs, and has not one farthing?' Gobseck continued. 'The day before yesterday you lost ten thousand francs at a ball at the Baron de Nucingen's.'

" 'Sir,' said the Count, with rare impudence, 'my affairs are no concern of yours,' and he looked the old man up and down. 'A man has no debts till payment is due.'

" 'True.'

" 'My bills will be duly met.'

" 'That is possible.'

" 'And at this moment the question between you and me is simply whether the security I am going to offer is sufficient for the sum I have come to borrow.'

" 'Precisely.'

"A cab stopped at the door, and the sound of wheels filled the room.

" 'I will bring something directly which perhaps will satisfy you,' cried the young man, and he left the room.

" 'Oh! my son,' exclaimed Gobseck, rising to his feet, and stretching out his arms to me, 'if he has good security, you have saved my life. It would be the death of me. Werbrust and Gigonnet imagined that they were going to play off a trick on me; and now, thanks to you, I shall have a good laugh at their expense to-night.'

"There was something frightful about the old man's ecstasy. It was the one occasion when he opened his heart to me; and that flash of joy, swift though it was, will never be effaced from my memory.

" 'Favor me so far as to stay here,' he added. 'I am armed, and a sure shot. I have gone tiger-hunting, and fought on the deck when there was nothing for it but to win or die; but I don't care to trust yonder elegant scoundrel.'

"He sat down again in his armchair before his bureau, and his face grew pale and impassive as before.

" 'Ah!' he continued, turning to me, 'you will see that lovely creature I once told you about; I can hear a fine lady's step in the corridor; it is she, no doubt;' and, as a matter of fact, the young man came in with a woman on his arm. I recognized the Countess, whose levée Gobseck had described for me, one of old Goriot's two daughters.

"The Countess did not see me at first; I stayed where I was in the window bay, with my face against the pane; but I saw her give Maxime a suspicious glance as she came into the money-lender's damp, dark room. So beautiful she was, that in spite of her faults I felt sorry for her. There was a terrible storm of anguish in her heart; her haughty, proud features were drawn and distorted with pain which she strove in vain to disguise. The young man had come to be her evil genius. I admired Gobseck, whose perspicacity had foreseen their future four years ago at the first bill which she endorsed.

" 'Probably,' said I to myself, 'this monster with the angel face controls every possible spring of action in her: rules her through vanity, jealousy, pleasure, and the current of life in the world.' "

The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu broke in on the story.

" 'Why, the woman's very virtues have been turned against her," she exclaimed. "He has made her shed tears of devotion, he has brought out the utmost natural generosity of woman, and then abused her kindness and made her pay very dearly for unhallowed bliss."

Derville did not understand the signs which Mme. de Grandlieu made to him.

"I confess," he said, "that I had no inclination to shed tears over the lot of this unhappy creature, so brilliant in

society, so repulsive to eyes that could read her heart; I shuddered rather at the sight of her murderer, a young angel with such a clear brow, such red lips and white teeth, such a winning smile. There they stood before their judge, he scrutinizing them much as some fifteenth-century Dominican inquisitor might have peered into the dungeons of the Holy Office while the torture was administered to two Moors.

"The Countess spoke tremulously. 'Sir,' she said, 'is there any way of obtaining the value of these diamonds, and of keeping the right of repurchase?' She held out a jewel-case.

"'Yes, madame,' I put in, and came forwards.

"She looked at me, and a shudder ran through her as she recognized me, and gave me the glance which means, 'Say nothing of this,' all the world over.

"'This,' said I, 'constitutes a sale with faculty of redemption, as it is called, a formal agreement to transfer and deliver over a piece of property, either real estate or personalty, for a given time, on the expiry of which the previous owner recovers his title to the property in question, upon payment of a stipulated sum.'

"She breathed more freely. The Count looked black; he had grave doubts whether Gobseck would lend very much on the diamonds after such a fall in their value. Gobseck, impassive as ever, had taken up his magnifying glass, and was quietly scrutinizing the jewels. If I were to live for a hundred years, I should never forget the sight of his face at that moment. There was a flush in his pale cheeks; his eyes seemed to have caught the sparkle of the stones, for there was an unnatural glitter in them. He rose and went to the light, holding the diamonds close to his toothless mouth, as if he meant to devour them; mumbling vague words over them, holding up bracelets, sprays, necklaces, and tiaras one after another, to judge their water, whiteness, and cutting; taking them out of the jewel-case and putting them in again, letting the play of the light bring out all their fires. He

was more like a child than an old man; or, rather, childhood and dotage seemed to meet in him.

"'Fine stones! The set would have fetched three hundred thousand francs before the Revolution. What water! Genuine Asiatic diamonds from Golconda or Visapur. Do you know what they are worth? No, no; no one in Paris but Gobseck can appreciate them. In the time of the Empire such a set would have cost another two hundred thousand francs!'

"He gave a disgusted shrug, and added:

"'But now diamonds are going down in value every day. The Brazilians have swamped the market with them since the Peace; but the Indian stones are a better color. Others wear them now besides court ladies. Does madame go to court?'

"While he flung out these terrible words, he examined one stone after another with delight which no words can describe.

"'Flawless!' he said. 'Here is a speck! . . . here is a flaw! . . . A fine stone that!'

"His haggard face was so lighted up by the sparkling jewels, that it put me in mind of a dingy old mirror, such as you see in country inns. The glass receives every luminous image without reflecting the light, and a traveler bold enough to look for his face in it beholds a man in an apoplectic fit.

"'Well?' asked the Count, clapping Gobseck on the shoulder.

"The old boy trembled. He put down his playthings on his bureau, took his seat, and was a money-lender once more—hard, cold, and polished as a marble column.

"'How much do you want?'

"'One hundred thousand francs for three years,' said the Count.

"'That is possible,' said Gobseck, and then from a mahogany box (Gobseck's jewel-case) he drew out a faultlessly adjusted pair of scales!

"He weighed the diamonds, calculating the value of stones and setting at sight (Heaven knows how!), delight and severity struggling in the expression of his face the meanwhile. The Countess was plunged in a kind of stupor; to me, watching her, it seemed that she was fathoming the depths of the abyss into which she had fallen. There was remorse still left in that woman's soul. Perhaps a hand held out in human charity might save her. I would try.

"'Are the diamonds your personal property, madame?' I asked in a clear voice.

"'Yes, monsieur,' she said, looking at me with proud eyes.

"'Make out the deed of purchase with power of redemption, chatterbox,' said Gobseck to me, resigning his chair at the bureau in my favor.

"'Madame is without doubt a married woman?' I tried again.

"She nodded abruptly.

"'Then I will not draw up the deed,' said I.

"'And why not?' asked Gobseck.

"'Why not?' echoed I, as I drew the old man into the bay window so as to speak aside with him. 'Why not? This woman is under her husband's control; the agreement would be void in law; you could not possibly assert your ignorance of a fact recorded on the very face of the document itself. You would be compelled at once to produce the diamonds deposited with you, according to the weight, value, and cutting therein described.'

"Gobseck cut me short with a nod, and turned towards the guilty couple.

"'He is right!' he said. 'That puts the whole thing in a different light. Eighty thousand francs down, and you leave the diamonds with me,' he added, in the husky, flute-like voice. 'In the way of property, possession is as good as a title.'

"'But——' objected the young man.

"'You can take it or leave it,' continued Gobseck, returning the jewel-case to the lady as he spoke.

" 'I have too many risks to run.'

" 'It would be better to throw yourself at your husband's feet,' I bent to whisper in her ear.

"The usurer doubtless knew what I was saying from the movement of my lips. He gave me a cool glance. The Count's face grew livid. The Countess was visibly wavering. Maxime stepped up to her, and, low as he spoke, I could catch the words:

" 'Adieu, dear Anastasie, may you be happy! As for me, by to-morrow my troubles will be over.'

" 'Sir!' cried the lady, turning to Gobseck, 'I accept your offer.'

" 'Come, now,' returned Gobseck. 'You have been a long time in coming to it, my fair lady.'

"He wrote out a cheque for fifty thousand francs on the Bank of France, and handed it to the Countess.

" 'Now,' continued he with a smile, such a smile as you will see in portraits of M. Voltaire, 'now I will give you the rest of the amount in bills, thirty thousand francs' worth of paper as good as bullion. This gentleman here has just said, "My bills will be met when they are due," ' added he, producing certain drafts bearing the Count's signature, all protested the day before at the request of some of the confraternity, who had probably made them over to him (Gobseck) at a considerably reduced figure.

"The young man growled out something, in which the words 'Old scoundrel!' were audible. Daddy Gobseck did not move an eyebrow. He drew a pair of pistols out of a pigeon-hole, remarking coolly:

" 'As the insulted man, I fire first.'

" 'Maxime, you owe this gentleman an explanation,' cried the trembling Countess in a low voice.

" 'I had no intention of giving offence,' stammered Maxime.

" 'I am quite sure of that,' Gobseck answered calmly; 'you had no intention of meeting your bills, that was all."

"The Countess rose, bowed, and vanished, with a great

dread gnawing her, I doubt not. M. de Trailles was bound to follow, but before he went he managed to say:

"'If either of you gentlemen should forget himself, I will have his blood, or he will have mine.'

"'Amen!' called Daddy Gobseck as he put his pistols back in their place; 'but a man must have blood in his veins though before he can risk it, my son, and you have nothing but mud in yours.'

"When the door was closed, and the two vehicles had gone, Gobseck rose to his feet and began to prance about.

"'I have the diamonds! I have the diamonds!' he cried again and again, 'the beautiful diamonds! such diamonds! and tolerably cheaply. Aha! aha! Werbrust and Gigonnet, you thought you had old Papa Gobseck! *Ego sum papa!* I am master of the lot of you! Paid! paid, principal and interest! How silly they will look to-night when I shall come out with this story between two games of dominoes!'

"The dark glee, the savage ferocity aroused by the possession of a few water-white pebbles, set me shuddering. I was dumb with amazement.

"'Aha! There you are, my boy!' said he. 'We will dine together. We will have some fun at your place, for I haven't a home of my own, and these restaurants, with their broths, and sauces, and wines, would poison the Devil himself.'

"Something in my face suddenly brought back the usual cold, impassive expression to his.

"'You don't understand it,' he said, and sitting down by the hearth, he put a tin saucepan full of milk on the brazier.—'Will you breakfast with me?' continued he. 'Perhaps there will be enough here for two.'

"'Thanks,' said I, 'I do not breakfast till noon.'

"I had scarcely spoken before hurried footsteps sounded from the passage. The stranger stopped at Gobseck's door and rapped; there was that in the knock which suggested a man transported with rage. Gobseck reconnoitred him through the grating; then he opened the door, and in came a man of thirty-five or so, judged harmless apparently in

spite of his anger. The newcomer, who was quite plainly dressed, bore a strong resemblance to the late Duc de Richelieu. You must often have met him, he was the Countess' husband, a man with the aristocratic figure (permit the expression to pass) peculiar to statesmen of your faubourg.

"'Sir,' said this person, addressing himself to Gobseck, who had quite recovered his tranquillity, 'did my wife go out of this house just now?'

"'That is possible.'

"'Well, sir? do you not take my meaning?'

"'I have not the honor of the acquaintance of my lady your wife,' returned Gobseck. 'I have had a good many visitors this morning, women and men, and mannish young ladies, and young gentlemen who look like young ladies. I should find it very hard to say——'

"'A truce to jesting, sir! I mean the woman who has this moment gone out from you.'

"'How can I know whether she is your wife or not? I never had the pleasure of seeing you before.'

"'You are mistaken, M. Gobseck,' said the Count, with profound irony in his voice. 'We have met before, one morning in my wife's bedroom. You had come to demand payment for a bill—no bill of hers.'

"'It was no business of mine to inquire what value she had received for it,' said Gobseck, with a malignant look at the Count. 'I had come by the bill in the way of business. At the same time, monsieur,' continued Gobseck, quietly pouring coffee into his bowl of milk, without a trace of excitement or hurry in his voice, 'you will permit me to observe that your right to enter my house and expostulate with me is far from proven to my mind. I came of age in the sixty-first year of the preceding century.'

"'Sir,' said the Count, 'you have just bought family diamonds, which do not belong to my wife, for a mere trifle.'

"'Without feeling it incumbent upon me to tell you my private affairs, I will tell you this much, M. le Comte—if Mme. la Comtesse has taken your diamonds, you should have

sent a circular around to all the jewelers, giving them notice not to buy them; she might have sold them separately.'

"'You know my wife, sir!' roared the Count.

"'True.'

"'She is in her husband's power.'

"'That is possible.'

"'She had no right to dispose of those diamonds——'

"'Precisely.'

"'Very well, sir?'

"'Very well, sir. I knew your wife, and she is in her husband's power; I am quite willing, she is in the power of a good many people; but—I—do—*not*—know—your diamonds. If Mme. la Comtesse can put her name to a bill, she can go into business, of course, and buy and sell diamonds on her own account. The thing is plain on the face of it!'

"'Good-day, sir!' cried the Count, now white with rage. 'There are courts of justice.'

"'Quite so.'

"'This gentleman here,' he added, indicating me, 'was a witness of the sale.'

"'That is possible.'

"The Count turned to go. Feeling the gravity of the affair, I suddenly put in between the two belligerents.

"'M. le Comte,' said I, 'you are right, and M. Gobseck is by no means in the wrong. You could not prosecute the purchaser without bringing your wife into court, and the whole of the odium would not fall on her. I am an attorney, and I owe it to myself, and still more to my professional position, to declare that the diamonds of which you speak were purchased by M. Gobseck in my presence; but, in my opinion, it would be unwise to dispute the legality of the sale, especially as the goods are not readily recognizable. In equity your contention would lie, in law it would collapse. M. Gobseck is too honest a man to deny that the sale was a profitable transaction, more especially as my conscience, no less than my duty, compels me to make the admission. But once bring the case into a court of law, M. le Comte, the

issue would be doubtful. My advice to you is to come to terms with M. Gobseck, who can plead that he bought the diamonds in all good faith; you would be bound in any case to return the purchase-money. Consent to an arrangement, with power to redeem at the end of seven or eight months, or a year even, or any convenient lapse of time, for the repayment of the sum borrowed by Mme. la Comtesse, unless you would prefer to repurchase them outright and give security for repayment.'

"Gobseck dipped his bread into the bowl of coffee, and ate with perfect indifference; but at the words 'come to terms,' he looked at me as who should say, 'A fine fellow that! he has learned something from my lessons!' And I, for my part, riposted with a glance, which he understood uncommonly well. The business was dubious and shady; there was pressing need of coming to terms. Gobseck could not deny all knowledge of it, for I should appear as a witness. The Count thanked me with a smile of good-will.

"In the debate which followed, Gobseck showed greed enough and skill enough to baffle a whole congress of diplomatists; but in the end I drew up an instrument, in which the Count acknowledged the receipt of eighty-five thousand francs, interest included, in consideration of which Gobseck undertook to return the diamonds to the Count.

" 'What waste!' exclaimed he as he put his signature to the agreement. 'How is it possible to bridge such a gulf?'

" 'Have you many children, sir?' Gobseck asked gravely.

"The Count winced at the question; it was as if the old money-lender, like an experienced physician, had put his finger at once on the sore spot. The Comtesse's husband did not reply.

" 'Well," said Gobseck, taking the pained silence for answer, 'I know your story by heart. The woman is a fiend, but perhaps you love her still; I can well believe it; she made an impression on me. Perhaps, too, you would rather save your fortune, and keep it for one or two of your children? Well, fling yourself into the whirlpool of society, lose that

fortune at play, come to Gobseck pretty often. The world will say that I am a Jew, a Tartar, a usurer, a pirate, will say that I have ruined you! I snap my fingers at them! If anybody insults me, I lay my man out; nobody is a surer shot nor handles a rapier better than your servant. And every one knows it. Then, have a friend—if you can find one—and make over your property to him by a fictitious sale. You call that a *fidei commissum,* don't you?' he asked, turning to me.

"The Count seemed to be entirely absorbed in his own thoughts.

" 'You shall have your money to-morrow,' he said, 'have the diamonds in readiness,' and he went.

" 'There goes one who looks to me to be as stupid as an honest man,' Gobseck said coolly when the Count had gone.

" 'Say rather stupid as a man of passionate nature.'

" 'The Count owes you your fee for drawing up the agreement!' Gobseck called after me as I took my leave.

"One morning, a few days after the scene which initiated me into the terrible depths beneath the surface of the life of a woman of fashion, the Count came into my private office.

" 'I have come to consult you on a matter of grave moment,' he said, 'and I begin by telling you that I have perfect confidence in you, as I hope to prove to you. Your behavior to Mme. de Grandlieu is above all praise,' the Count went on. (You see, madame, that you have paid me a thousand times over for a very simple matter.)

"I bowed respectfully, and replied that I had done nothing but the duty of an honest man.

" 'Well,' the Count went on, 'I have made a great many inquiries about the singular personage to whom you owe your position. And from all that I can learn, Gobseck is a philosopher of the Cynic school. What do you think of his probity?"

" 'M. le Comte,' said I, 'Gobseck is my benefactor—at fif-

teen per cent,' I added, laughing. 'But his avarice does not authorize me to paint him to the life for a stranger's benefit.'

"'Speak out, sir. Your frankness cannot injure Gobseck or yourself. I do not expect to find an angel in a pawnbroker.'

"'Daddy Gobseck,' I began, 'is intimately convinced of the truth of the principle which he takes for a rule of life. In his opinion, money is a commodity which you may sell cheap or dear, according to circumstances, with a clear conscience. A capitalist, by charging a high rate of interest, becomes in his eyes a secured partner by anticipation in the profits of a paying concern or speculation. Apart from the peculiar philosophical views of human nature and financial principles, which enable him to behave like a usurer, I am fully persuaded that, out of his business, he is the most loyal and upright soul in Paris. There are two men in him; he is petty and great—a miser and a philosopher. If I were to die and leave a family behind me, he would be the guardian whom I should appoint. This was how I came to see Gobseck in this light, monsieur. I know nothing of his past life. He may have been a pirate, may, for anything I know, have been all over the world, trafficking in diamonds, or men, or women, or State secrets; but this I affirm of him—never has human soul been more thoroughly tempered and tried. When I paid off my loan, I asked him, with a little circumlocution of course, how it was that he had made me pay such an exorbitant rate of interest; and why, seeing that I was a friend, and he meant to do me a kindness, he should not have yielded to the wish and made it complete.—"My son," he said, "I released you from all need to feel any gratitude by giving you ground for the belief that you owed me nothing."—So we are the best friends in the world. That answer, monsieur, gives you the man better than any amount of description.'

"'I have made up my mind once and for all,' said the Count. 'Draw up the necessary papers; I am going to trans-

fer my property to Gobseck. I have no one but you to trust to in the draft of the counter-deed, which will declare that this transfer is a simulated sale, and that Gobseck as trustee will administer my estate (as he knows how to administer), and undertakes to make over my fortune to my eldest son when he comes of age. Now, sir, this I must tell you: I should be afraid to have that precious document in my own keeping. My boy is so fond of his mother, that I cannot trust him with it. So dare I beg of you to keep it for me? In case of death, Gobseck would make you legatee of my property. Every contingency is provided for.'

"The Count paused for a moment. He seemed greatly agitated.

"'A thousand pardons,' he said at length; 'I am in great pain, and have very grave misgivings as to my health. Recent troubles have disturbed me very painfully, and forced me to take this great step.'

"'Allow me first to thank you, monsieur,' said I, 'for the trust you place me in. But I am bound to deserve it by pointing out to you that you are disinheriting your—other children. They bear your name. Merely as the children of a once-loved wife, now fallen from her position, they have a claim to an assured existence. I tell you plainly that I cannot accept the trust with which you propose to honor me unless their future is secured.'

"The Count trembled violently at the words, and tears came into his eyes as he grasped my hand, saying, 'I did not know my man thoroughly. You have made me both glad and sorry. We will make provision for the children in the counter-deed.'

"I went with him to the door; it seemed to me that there was a glow of satisfaction in his face at the thought of this act of justice.

"Now, Camille, this is how a young wife takes the first step to the brink of a precipice. A quadrille, a ballad, a picnic party is sometimes cause sufficient of frightful evils. You are hurried on by the presumptuous voice of vanity and

pride, on the faith of a smile, or through giddiness and folly! Shame and misery and remorse are three Furies awaiting every woman the moment she oversteps the limits——"

"Poor Camille can hardly keep awake," the Vicomtesse hastily broke in.—"Go to bed, child; you have no need of appalling pictures to keep you pure in heart and conduct."

Camille de Grandlieu took the hint and went.

"You were going rather too far, dear M. Derville," said the Vicomtesse, "an attorney is not a mother of daughters nor yet a preacher."

"But any newspaper is a thousand times——"

"Poor Derville!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse, "what has come over you? Do you really imagine that I allow a daughter of mine to read the newspapers?—Go on," she added after a pause.

"Three months after everything was signed and sealed between the Count and Gobseck——"

"You can call him the Comte de Restaud, now that Camille is not here," said the Vicomtesse.

"So be it! Well, time went by, and I saw nothing of the counter-deed, which by rights should have been in my hands. An attorney in Paris lives in such a whirl of business that with certain exceptions which we make for ourselves, we have not the time to give each individual client the amount of interest which he himself takes in his affairs. Still, one day when Gobseck came to dine with me, I asked him as we left the table if he knew how it was that I had heard no more of M. de Restaud.

" 'There are excellent reasons for that,' he said; 'the noble Count is at death's door. He is one of the soft stamp that cannot learn how to put an end to chagrin, and allow it to wear them out instead. Life is a craft, a profession; every man must take the trouble to learn that business. When he has learned what life is by dint of painful experiences, the fibre of him is toughened, and acquires a certain elasticity, so that he has his sensibilities under his own control; he disciplines himself till his nerves are like steel springs, which

always bend, but never break; given a sound digestion, and a man in such training ought to live as long as the cedars of Lebanon, and famous trees they are.'

"'Then is the Count actually dying?' I asked.

"'That is possible,' said Gobseck; 'the winding up of his estate will be a juicy bit of business for you.'

"I looked at my man, and said, by way of sounding him:

"'Just explain to me how it is that we, the Count and I, are the only men in whom you take an interest?'

"'Because you are the only two who have trusted me without finessing,' he said.

"Although this answer warranted my belief that Gobseck would act fairly even if the counter-deed were lost, I resolved to go to see the Count. I pleaded a business engagement, and we separated.

"I went straight to the Rue du Helder, and was shown into a room where the Countess sat playing with her children. When she heard my name, she sprang up and came to meet me, then she sat down and pointed without a word to a chair by the fire. Her face wore the inscrutable mask beneath which women of the world conceal their most vehement emotions. Trouble had withered that face already. Nothing of its beauty now remained, save the marvelous outlines in which its principal charm had lain.

"'It is essential, madame, that I should speak to M. le Comte——"

"'If so, you would be more favored than I am,' she said, interrupting me. 'M. de Restaud will see no one. He will hardly allow his doctor to come, and will not be nursed even by me. When people are ill, they have such strange fancies! They are like children, they do not know what they want.'

"'Perhaps, like children, they know very well what they want.'

"The Countess reddened. I almost repented a thrust worthy of Gobseck. So, by way of changing the conversation, I added, 'But M. de Restaud cannot possibly lie there alone all day, madame.'

"'His oldest boy is with him,' she said.

"It was useless to gaze at the Countess; she did not blush this time, and it looked to me as if she were resolved more firmly than ever that I should not penetrate into her secrets.

"'You must understand, madame, that my proceeding is no way indiscreet. It is strongly to his interest—' I bit my lips, feeling that I had gone the wrong way to work. The Countess immediately took advantage of my slip.

"'My interests are in no way separate from my husband's, sir,' said she. 'There is nothing to prevent your addressing yourself to me——'

"'The business which brings me here concerns no one but M. le Comte,' I said firmly.

"'I will let him know of your wish to see him.'

"The civil tone and expression assumed for the occasion did not impose upon me; I divined that she would never allow me to see her husband. I chatted on about indifferent matters for a little while, so as to study her; but, like all women who have once begun to plot for themselves, she could dissimulate with the rare perfection which, in your sex, means the last degree of perfidy. If I may dare to say it, I looked for anything from her, even a crime. She produced this feeling in me, because it was so evident from her manner and in all that she did or said, down to the very inflections of her voice, that she had an eye to the future. I went.

"Now, I will pass on to the final scenes of this adventure, throwing in a few circumstances brought to light by time, and some details guessed by Gobseck's perspicacity or by my own.

"When the Comte de Restaud apparently plunged into the vortex of dissipation, something passed between the husband and wife, something which remains an impenetrable secret, but the wife sank even lower in the husband's eyes. As soon as he became so ill that he was obliged to take to his bed, he manifested his aversion for the Countess and the two youngest children. He forbade them to enter his room, and any

attempt to disobey his wishes brought on such dangerous attacks that the doctor implored the Countess to submit to her husband's wish.

"Mme. de Restaud had seen the family estates and property, nay, the very mansion in which she lived, pass into the hands of Gobseck, who appeared to play the fantastic ogre so far as their wealth was concerned. She partially understood what her husband was doing, no doubt. M. de Trailles was traveling in England (his creditors had been a little too pressing of late), and no one else was in a position to enlighten the lady, and explain that her husband was taking precautions against her at Gobseck's suggestion. It is said that she held out for a long while before she gave the signature required by French law for the sale of the property; nevertheless the Count gained his point. The Countess was convinced that her husband was realizing his fortune, and that somewhere or other there would be a little bunch of notes representing the amount; they had been deposited with a notary, or perhaps at the Bank, or in some safe hiding-place. Following out her train of thought, it was evident that M. de Restaud must of necessity have some kind of document in his possession by which any remaining property could be recovered and handed over to his son.

"So she made up her mind to keep the strictest possible watch over the sick-room. She ruled despotically in the house, and everything in it was submitted to this feminine espionage. All day she sat in the salon adjoining her husband's room, so that she could hear every syllable that he uttered, every least movement that he made. She had a bed put there for her of a night, but she did not sleep very much. The doctor was entirely in her interests. Such wifely devotion seemed praiseworthy enough. With the natural subtlety of perfidy, she took care to disguise M. de Restaud's repugnance for her, and feigned distress so perfectly that she gained a sort of celebrity. Strait-laced women were even found to say that she had expiated her sins. Always before her eyes she beheld a vision of the destitution to follow on

the Count's death if her presence of mind should fail her; and in these ways the wife, repulsed from the bed of pain on which her husband lay and groaned, had drawn a charmed circle round about it. So near, yet kept at a distance; all-powerful, but in disgrace, the apparently devoted wife was lying in wait for death and opportunity; crouching like the ant-lion at the bottom of his spiral pit, ever on the watch for the prey that cannot escape, listening to the fall of every grain of sand.

"The strictest censor could not but recognize that the Countess pushed maternal sentiment to the last degree. Her father's death had been a lesson to her, people said. She worshiped her children. They were so young that she could hide the disorders of her life from their eyes, and could win their love; she had given them the best and most brilliant education. I confess that I cannot help admiring her and feeling sorry for her. Gobseck used to joke me about it. Just about that time she had discovered Maxime's baseness, and was expiating the sins of the past in tears of blood. I am sure of it. Hateful as were the measures which she took for regaining control of her husband's money, were they not the result of a mother's love, and a desire to repair the wrongs she had done her children? And again, it may be, like many a woman who has experienced the storms of lawless love, she felt a longing to lead a virtuous life again. Perhaps she only learned the worth of that life when she came to reap the woeful harvest sown by her errors.

"Every time that little Ernest came out of his father's room, she put him through a searching examination as to all that his father had done or said. The boy willingly complied with his mother's wishes, and told her even more than she asked in her anxious affection, as he thought.

"My visit was a ray of light for the Countess. She was determined to see in me the instrument of the Count's vengeance, and resolved that I should not be allowed to go near the dying man. I augured ill of all this, and earnestly wished for an interview, for I was not easy in my mind about the

fate of the counter-deed. If it should fall into the Countess' hands, she might turn it to her own account, and that would be the beginning of a series of interminable lawsuits between her and Gobseck. I knew the usurer well enough to feel convinced that he would never give up the property to her; there was room for plenty of legal quibbling over a series of transfers, and I alone knew all the ins and outs of the matter. I was minded to prevent such a tissue of misfortune, so I went to the Countess a second time.

"I have noticed, madame," said Derville, turning to the Vicomtesse, and speaking in a confidential tone, "certain moral phenomena to which we do not pay enough attention. I am naturally an observer of human nature, and instinctively I bring a spirit of analysis to the business that I transact in the interest of others, when human passions are called into lively play. Now, I have often noticed, and always with new wonder, that two antagonists almost always divine each other's inmost thoughts and ideas. Two enemies sometimes possess a power of clear insight into mental processes, and read each other's minds as two lovers read in either soul. So when we came together, the Countess and I, I understood at once the reason of her antipathy for me, disguised though it was by the most gracious forms of politeness and civility. I had been forced to be her confidant, and a woman cannot but hate the man before whom she is compelled to blush. And she on her side knew that if I was the man in whom her husband placed confidence, that husband had not as yet given up his fortune.

"I will spare you the conversation, but it abides in my memory as one of the most dangerous encounters in my career. Nature had bestowed on her all the qualities which, combined, are irresistibly fascinating; she could be pliant and proud by turns, and confiding and coaxing in her manner; she even went so far as to try to arouse curiosity and kindle love in her effort to subjugate me. It was a failure. As I took my leave of her, I caught a gleam of hate and rage in her eyes that made me shudder. We parted enemies. She

would fain have crushed me out of existence; and for my own part, I felt pity for her, and for some natures pity is the deadliest of insults. This feeling pervaded the last representations I put before her; and when I left her, I left, I think, dread in the depths of her soul, by declaring that, turn which way she would, ruin lay inevitably before her.

"'If I were to see M. le Comte, your children's property at any rate would——'

"'I should be at your mercy,' she said, breaking in upon me, disgust in her gesture.

"Now that we had spoken frankly, I made up my mind to save the family from impending destitution. I resolved to strain the law at need to gain my ends, and this was what I did. I sued the Comte de Restaud for a sum of money, ostensibly due to Gobseck, and gained judgment. The Countess, of course, did not allow him to know of this, but I had gained my point, I had a right to affix seals to everything on the death of the Count. I bribed one of the servants in the house—the man undertook to let me know at any hour of the day or night if his master should be at the point of death, so that I could intervene at once, scare the Countess with a threat of affixing seals, and so secure the counter-deed.

"I learned later on that the woman was studying the Code, with her husband's dying moans in her ears. If we could picture the thoughts of those who stand about a deathbed, what fearful sights should we not see? Money is always the motive-spring of the schemes elaborated, of all the plans that are made and the plots that are woven about it! Let us leave these details, nauseating in the nature of them; but perhaps they may have given you some insight into all that this husband and wife endured; perhaps too they may unveil much that is passing in secret in other houses.

"For two months the Comte de Restaud lay on his bed, alone, and resigned to his fate. Mortal disease was slowly

sapping the strength of mind and body. Unaccountable and grotesque sick fancies preyed upon him; he would not suffer them to set his room in order, no one should nurse him, he would not even allow them to make his bed. All his surroundings bore the marks of this last degree of apathy, the furniture was out of place, the daintiest trifles were covered with dust and cobwebs. In health he had been a man of refined and expensive tastes, now he positively delighted in the comfortless look of the room. A host of objects required in illness—rows of medicine bottles, empty and full, most of them dirty, crumpled linen and broken plates, littered the writing-table, chairs, and chimney-piece. An open warming-pan lay on the floor before the grate; a bath, still full of mineral water, had not been taken away. The sense of coming dissolution pervaded all the details of an unsightly chaos. Signs of death appeared in things inanimate before the Destroyer came to the body on the bed. The Comte de Restaud could not bear the daylight, the Venetian shutters were closed, darkness deepened the gloom in the dismal chamber. The sick man himself had wasted greatly. All the life in him seemed to have taken refuge in the still brilliant eyes. The livid whiteness of his face was something horrible to see, enhanced as it was by the long dank locks of hair that straggled along his cheeks, for he would never suffer them to cut it. He looked like some religious fanatic in the desert. Mental suffering was extinguishing all human instincts in this man of scarce fifty years of age, whom all Paris had known as so brilliant and so successful.

"One morning at the beginning of December 1824, he looked up at Ernest, who sat at the foot of his bed gazing at his father with wistful eyes.

"'Are you in pain?' the little Vicomte asked.

"'No,' said the Count, with a ghastly smile, 'it all lies *here and about my heart!*'

"He pointed to his forehead, and then laid his wasted fingers on his hollow chest. Ernest began to cry at the sight.

"'How is it that M. Derville does not come to me?' the

Count asked his servant (he thought that Maurice was really attached to him, but the man was entirely in the Countess' interest)—'What! Maurice!' and the dying man suddenly sat upright in his bed, and seemed to recover all his presence of mind, 'I have sent for my attorney seven or eight times during the last fortnight, and he does not come!' he cried. 'Do you imagine that I am to be trifled with? Go for him, at once, this very instant, and bring him back with you. If you do not carry out my orders, I shall get up and go myself.'

" 'Madame,' said the man as he came into the salon, 'you heard M. le Comte; what ought I to do?'

" 'Pretend to go to the attorney, and when you come back, tell your master that his man of business is forty leagues away from Paris on an important lawsuit. Say that he is expected back at the end of the week.—Sick people never know how ill they are,' thought the Countess; 'he will wait till the man comes home.'

"The doctor had said on the previous evening that the Count could scarcely live through the day. When the servant came back two hours later to give that hopeless answer, the dying man seemed to be greatly agitated.

" 'O God!' he cried again and again, 'I put my trust in none but Thee.'

"For a long while he lay and gazed at his son, and spoke in a feeble voice at last.

" 'Ernest, my boy, you are very young; but you have a good heart; you can understand, no doubt, that a promise given to a dying man is sacred; a promise to a father . . . Do you feel that you can be trusted with a secret, and keep it so well and closely that even your mother herself shall not know that you have a secret to keep? There is no one else in this house whom I can trust to-day. You will not betray my trust, will you?'

" 'No, father.'

" 'Very well, then, Ernest, in a minute or two I will give you a sealed packet that belongs to M. Derville; you must take such care of it that no one can know that you have it;

then you must slip out of the house and put the letter into the post-box at the corner.'

"'Yes, father.'

"'Can I depend upon you?'

"'Yes, father.'

"'Come and kiss me. You have made death less bitter to me, dear boy. In six or seven years' time you will understand the importance of this secret, and you will be well rewarded then for your quickness and obedience, you will know then how much I love you. Leave me alone for a minute, and let no one—no matter whom—come in meanwhile.'

"Ernest went out and saw his mother standing in the next room.

"'Ernest,' said she, 'come here.'

"She sat down, drew her son to her knees, and clasped him in her arms, and held him tightly to her heart.

"'Ernest, your father said something to you just now.'

"'Yes, mamma.'

"'What did he say?'

"'I cannot repeat it, mamma.'

"'Oh, my dear child!' cried the Countess, kissing him in rapture. 'You have kept your secret; how glad that makes me! Never tell a lie; never fail to keep your word—those are two principles which should never be forgotten.'

"'Oh! mamma, how beautiful you are! *You* have never told a lie, I am quite sure.'

"'Once or twice, Ernest dear, I have lied. Yes, and I have not kept my word under circumstances which speak louder than all precepts. Listen, my Ernest, you are big enough and intelligent enough to see that your father drives me away, and will not allow me to nurse him, and this is not natural, for you know how much I love him.'

"'Yes, mamma.'

"The Countess began to cry. 'Poor child!' she said, 'this misfortune is the result of treacherous insinuations. Wicked people have tried to separate me from your father to satisfy their greed. They mean to take all our money from us and to

keep it for themselves. If your father were well, the division between us would soon be over; he would listen to me; he is loving and kind; he would see his mistake. But now his mind is affected, and his prejudices against me have become a fixed idea, a sort of mania with him. It is one result of his illness. Your father's fondness for you is another proof that his mind is deranged. Until he fell ill you never noticed that he loved you more than Pauline and Georges. It is all caprice with him now. In his affection for you he might take it into his head to tell you to do things for him. If you do not want to ruin us all, my darling, and to see your mother begging her bread like a pauper woman, you must tell her everything——'

"'Ah!' cried the Count. He had opened the door and stood there, a sudden, half-naked apparition, almost as thin and fleshless as a skeleton.

"His smothered cry produced a terrible effect upon the Countess; she sat motionless, as if a sudden stupor had seized her. Her husband was as white and wasted as if he had risen out of his grave.

"'You have filled my life to the full with trouble, and now you are trying to vex my deathbed, to warp my boy's mind, and make a depraved man of him!' he cried, hoarsely.

"The Countess flung herself at his feet. His face, working with the last emotions of life, was almost hideous to see.

"'Mercy! mercy!' she cried aloud, shedding a torrent of tears.

"'Have you shown me any pity?' he asked. 'I allowed you to squander your own money, and now do you mean to squander my fortune, too, and ruin my son?'

"'Ah! well, yes, have no pity for me, be merciless to me!' she cried. 'But the children? Condemn your widow to live in a convent; I will obey you; I will do anything, anything that you bid me, to expiate the wrong I have done you, if that so the children may be happy! The children! Oh, the children!'

"'I have only one child,' said the Count, stretching out a wasted arm, in his despair, towards his son.

" 'Pardon a penitent woman, a penitent woman! . . .' wailed the Countess, her arms about her husband's damp feet. She could not speak for sobbing; vague, incoherent sounds broke from her parched throat.

" 'You dare to talk of penitence after all that you said to Ernest!' exclaimed the dying man, shaking off the Countess, who lay groveling over his feet.—'You turn me to ice!' he added, and there was something appalling in the indifference with which he uttered the words. 'You have been a bad daughter; you have been a bad wife; you will be a bad mother.'

"The wretched woman fainted away. The dying man reached his bed and lay down again, and a few hours later sank into unconsciousness. The priests came and administered the sacraments.

"At midnight he died; the scene that morning had exhausted his remaining strength, and on the stroke of midnight I arrived with Daddy Gobseck. The house was in confusion, and under cover of it we walked up into the little salon adjoining the death-chamber. The three children were there in tears, with two priests, who had come to watch with the dead. Ernest came over to me, and said that his mother desired to be alone in the Count's room.

" 'Do not go in,' he said; and I admired the child for his tone and gesture; 'she is praying there.'

"Gobseck began to laugh that soundless laugh of his, but I felt too much touched by the feeling in Ernest's little face to join in the miser's sardonic amusement. When Ernest saw that we moved towards the door, he planted himself in front of it, crying out, 'Mamma, here are some gentlemen in black who want to see you!'

"Gobseck lifted Ernest out of the way as if the child had been a feather, and opened the door.

"What a scene it was that met our eyes! The room was in frightful disorder; clothes and papers and rags lay tossed about in a confusion horrible to see in the presence of Death; and there, in the midst, stood the Countess in dishev-



eled despair, unable to utter a word, her eyes glittering. The Count had scarcely breathed his last before his wife came in and forced open the drawers and the desk; the carpet was strewn with litter, some of the furniture and boxes were broken, the signs of violence could be seen everywhere. But if her search had at first proved fruitless, there was that in her excitement and attitude which led me to believe that she had found the mysterious documents at last. I glanced at the bed, and professional instinct told me all that had happened. The mattress had been flung contemptuously down by the bedside, and across it, face downwards, lay the body of the Count, like one of the paper envelopes that strewed the carpet—he too was nothing now but an envelope. There was something grotesquely horrible in the attitude of the stiffening rigid limbs.

"The dying man must have hidden the counter-deed under his pillow to keep it safe so long as life should last; and his wife must have guessed his thought; indeed, it might be read plainly in his last dying gesture, in the convulsive clutch of his claw-like hands. The pillow had been flung to the floor at the foot of the bed; I could see the print of her heel upon it. At her feet lay a paper with the Count's arms on the seals; I snatched it up, and saw that it was addressed to me. I looked steadily at the Countess with the pitiless clear-sightedness of an examining magistrate confronting a guilty creature. The contents were blazing in the grate; she had flung them on the fire at the sound of our approach, imagining, from a first hasty glance at the provisions which I had suggested for her children, that she was destroying a will which disinherited them. A tormented conscience and involuntary horror of the deed which she had done had taken away all power of reflection. She had been caught in the act, and possibly the scaffold was rising before her eyes, and she already felt the felon's branding iron.

"There she stood gasping for breath, waiting for us to speak, staring at us with haggard eyes.

"I went across to the grate and pulled out an unburned

fragment. 'Ah, madame!' I exclaimed, 'you have ruined your children! Those papers were their titles to their property.'

"Her mouth twitched, she looked as if she were threatened by a paralytic seizure.

"'Eh! eh!' cried Gobseck; the harsh, shrill tone grated upon our ears like the sound of a brass candlestick scratching a marble surface.

"There was a pause, then the old man turned to me and said quietly:

"'Do you intend Mme. la Comtesse to suppose that I am not the rightful owner of the property sold to me by her late husband? This house belongs to me now.'

"A sudden blow on the head from a bludgeon would have given me less pain and astonishment. The Countess saw the look of hesitation in my face.

"'Monsieur,' she cried, 'Monsieur!' She could find no other words.

"'You are a trustee, are you not?' I asked.

"'That is possible.'

"'Then do you mean to take advantage of this crime of hers?'

"'Precisely.'

"I went at that, leaving the Countess sitting by her husband's bedside, shedding hot tears. Gobseck followed me. Outside in the street I separated from him, but he came after me, flung me one of those searching glances with which he probed men's minds, and said in the husky flute-tones, pitched in a shriller key:

"'Do you take it upon yourself to judge me?'

"From that time forward we saw little of each other. Gobseck let the Count's mansion on lease; he spent the summers on the country estates. He was a lord of the manor in earnest, putting up farm buildings, repairing mills and roadways, and planting timber. I came across him one day in a walk in the Jardin des Tuileries.

"'The Countess is behaving like a heroine,' said I; 'she gives herself up entirely to the children's education; she is giving them a perfect bringing up. The oldest boy is a charming young fellow——'

"'That is possible.'

"'But ought you not to help Ernest?' I suggested.

"'Help him!' cried Gobseck. 'Not I. Adversity is the greatest of all teachers; adversity teaches us to know the value of money and the worth of men and women. Let him set sail on the seas of Paris; when he is a qualified pilot, we will give him a ship to steer.'

"I left him without seeking to explain the meaning of his words.

"M. de Restaud's mother has prejudiced him against me, and he is very far from taking me as his legal adviser; still, I went to see Gobseck last week to tell him about Ernest's love for Mlle. Camille, and pressed him to carry out his contract, since that young Restaud is just of age.

"I found that the old bill-discounter had been kept to his bed for a long time by the complaint of which he was to die. He put me off, saying that he would give the matter his attention when he could get up again and see after his business; his idea being no doubt that he would not give up any of his possessions so long as the breath was in him; no other reason could be found for his shuffling answer. He seemed to me to be much worse than he at all suspected. I stayed with him long enough to discern the progress of a passion which age had converted into a sort of craze. He wanted to be alone in the house, and had taken the rooms one by one as they fell vacant. In his own room he had changed nothing; the furniture which I knew so well sixteen years ago looked the same as ever; it might have been kept under a glass case. Gobseck's faithful old portress, with her husband, a pensioner, who sat in the entry while she was upstairs, was still his housekeeper and charwoman, and now in addition his sick-nurse. In spite of his feebleness, Gobseck saw his clients himself as heretofore, and received sums of money; his affairs

had been so simplified, that he only needed to send his pensioner out now and again on an errand, and could carry on business in his bed.

"After the treaty, by which France recognized the Haytian Republic, Gobseck was one of the members of the commission appointed to liquidate claims and assess repayments due by Hayti; his special knowledge of old fortunes in San Domingo, and the planters and their heirs and assigns to whom the indemnities were due, had led to his nomination. Gobseck's peculiar genius had then devised an agency for discounting the planters' claims on the government. The business was carried on under the names of Werbrust and Gigonnet, with whom he shared the spoil without disbursements, for his knowledge was accepted instead of capital. The agency was a sort of distillery, in which money was extracted from doubtful claims, and the claims of those who knew no better, or had no confidence in the government. As a liquidator, Gobseck could make terms with the large landed proprietors; and these, either to gain a higher percentage of their claims, or to ensure prompt settlements, would send him presents in proportion to their means. In this way presents came to be a kind of percentage upon sums too large to pass through his control, while the agency bought up cheaply the small and dubious claims, or the claims of those persons who preferred a little ready money to a deferred and somewhat hazy repayment by the Republic. Gobseck was the insatiable boa constrictor of the great business. Every morning he received his tribute, eyeing it like a Nabob's prime minister, as he considers whether he will sign a pardon. Gobseck would take anything, from the present of game sent him by some poor devil or the pound's weight of wax candles from devout folk, to the rich man's plate and the speculator's gold snuff-box. Nobody knew what became of the presents sent to the old money-lender. Everything went in, but nothing came out.

"'On the word of an honest woman,' said the portress, an old acquaintance of mine, 'I believe he swallows it all and

is none the fatter for it; he is as thin and dried up as the cuckoo in the clock.'

"At length, last Monday, Gobseck sent his pensioner for me. The man came up to my private office.

"'Be quick and come, M. Derville,' said he, 'the governor is just going to hand in his checks; he has grown as yellow as a lemon; he is fidgeting to speak with you; death has fair hold of him; the rattle is working in his throat.'

"When I entered Gobseck's room, I found the dying man kneeling before the grate. If there was no fire on the hearth, there was at any rate a monstrous heap of ashes. He had dragged himself out of bed, but his strength had failed him, and he could neither go back nor find voice to complain.

"'You felt cold, old friend,' I said, as I helped him back to his bed; 'how can you do without a fire?'

"'I am not cold at all,' he said. 'No fire here! no fire! I am going, I know not where, lad,' he went on, glancing at me with blank, lightless eyes, 'but I am going away from this.—I have *carpology*,' said he (the use of the technical term showing how clear and accurate his mental processes were even now). 'I thought the room was full of live gold, and I got up to catch some of it.—To whom will all mine go, I wonder? Not to the Crown; I have left a will, look for it, Grotius. *La belle Hollandaise* had a daughter; I once saw the girl somewhere or other, in the Rue Vivienne, one evening. They call her "*La Torpille*," I believe; she is as pretty as pretty can be; look her up, Grotius. You are my executor; take what you like; help yourself. There are Strasburg pies, there, and bags of coffee, and sugar, and gold spoons. Give the Odiot service to your wife. But who is to have he diamonds? Are you going to take them, lad? There is snuff too—sell it at Hamburg, tobaccos are worth half as much again at Hamburg. All sorts of things I have in fact, and now I must go and leave them all.—Come, Papa Gobseck, no weakness, be yourself!'

"He raised himself in bed, the lines of his face standing out as sharply against the pillow as if the profile had been

cast in bronze; he stretched out a lean arm and bony hand along the coverlet and clutched it, as if so he would fain keep his hold on life, then he gazed hard at the grate, cold as his own metallic eyes, and died in full consciousness of death. To us—the portress, the old pensioner, and myself—he looked like one of the old Romans standing behind the Consuls in Lethière's picture of the *Death of the Sons of Brutus.*

"'He was a good-plucked one, the old Lascar!' said the pensioner in his soldierly fashion.

"But as for me, the dying man's fantastical enumeration of his riches was still sounding in my ears, and my eyes, following the direction of his, rested on that heap of ashes. It struck me that it was very large. I took the tongs, and as soon as I stirred the cinders, I felt the metal underneath, a mass of gold and silver coins, receipts taken during his illness, doubtless, after he grew too feeble to lock the money up, and could trust no one to take it to the bank for him.

"'Run for the justice of the peace,' said I, turning to the old pensioner, 'so that everything can be sealed here at once.'

"Gobseck's last words and the old portress' remarks had struck me. I took the keys of the rooms on the first and second floor to make a visitation. The first door that I opened revealed the meaning of the phrases which I took for mad ravings; and I saw the length to which covetousness goes when it survives only as an illogical instinct, the last stage of greed of which you find so many examples among misers in country towns.

"In the room next to the one in which Gobseck had died, a quantity of eatables of all kinds were stored—putrid pies, mouldy fish, nay, even shell-fish, the stench almost choked me. Maggots and insects swarmed. These comparatively recent presents were put down, pell-mell, among chests of tea, bags of coffee, and packing-cases of every shape. A silver soup tureen on the chimney-piece was full of advices of the arrival of goods consigned to his order at Havre, bales of cotton, hogsheads of sugar, barrels of rum, coffees, indigo,

tobaccos, a perfect bazaar of colonial produce. The room itself was crammed with furniture, and silver-plate, and lamps, and vases, and pictures; there were books, and curiosities, and fine engravings lying rolled up, unframed. Perhaps these were not all presents, and some part of this vast quantity of stuff had been deposited with him in the shape of pledges, and had been left on his hands in default of payment. I noticed jewel-cases, with ciphers and armorial-bearings stamped upon them, and sets of fine table-linen, and weapons of price; but none of the things were docketed. I opened a book which seemed to be misplaced, and found a thousand-franc note in it. I promised myself that I would go through everything thoroughly; I would try the ceilings, and floors, and walls, and cornices to discover all the gold, hoarded with such passionate greed by a Dutch miser worthy of a Rembrandt's brush. In all the course of my professional career I have never seen such impressive signs of the eccentricity of avarice.

"I went back to his room, and found an explanation of this chaos and accumulation of riches in a pile of letters lying under the paper-weights on his desk—Gobseck's correspondence with the various dealers to whom doubtless he usually sold his presents. These persons had, perhaps, fallen victims to Gobseck's cleverness, or Gobseck may have wanted fancy prices for his goods; at any rate, every bargain hung in suspense. He had not disposed of the eatables to Chevet, because Chevet would only take them of him at a loss of thirty per cent. Gobseck haggled for a few francs between the prices, and while they wrangled the goods became unsalable. Again, Gobseck had refused free delivery of his silver-plate, and declined to guarantee the weights of his coffees. There had been a dispute over each article, the first indication in Gobseck of the childishness and incomprehensible obstinacy of age, a condition of mind reached at last by all men in whom a strong passion survives the intellect.

"I said to myself, as he had said, 'To whom will all these riches go?' . . . And when I think of the grotesque

information he gave me as to the present address of his heiress, I foresee that it will be my duty to search all the houses of ill-fame in Paris to pour out an immense fortune on some worthless jade. But, in the first place, know this—that in a few days time Ernest de Restaud will come into a fortune to which his title is unquestionable, a fortune which will put him in a position to marry Mlle. Camille, even after adequate provision has been made for his mother the Comtesse de Restaud, and his sister and brother."

PIERRE GRASSOU

To Lieutenant-Colonel Périollas (of the Artillery) as a proof of the author's affection and esteem.

DE BALZAC.

ON every occasion when you have gone seriously to study the Exhibition of works in sculpture and painting, such as it has been since the Revolution of 1830, have you not been seized by a feeling of discomfort, boredom, and melancholy at the sight of the long, over-filled galleries? Since 1830 the Salon has ceased to exist. Once more the Louvre has been taken by storm by the mob of artists, and they have kept possession. Formerly, when the Salon gave us a choice collection of works of art, it secured the greatest honors for the examples exhibited there. Among the two hundred selected pictures the public chose again; a crown was awarded to the masterpieces by unknown hands. Impassioned discussions arose as to the merits of a painting. The abuse heaped on Delacroix and on Ingres were not of less service to them than the praises and fanaticism of their adherents.

In our day neither the crowd nor the critic can be vehement over the objects in this bazaar. Being compelled to make the selection which was formerly undertaken by the examining jury, their attention is exhausted by the effort; and by the time it is finished the Exhibition closes.

Until 1817 the pictures accepted never extended beyond the first two columns of the long gallery containing the works of the old masters, and this year they filled the whole of this space, to the great surprise of the public. Historical painting, *genre,* easel pictures, landscape, flowers, animals, and water-color painting,—each of these eight classes could never yield more than twenty pictures worthy of the eye of the

public, who cannot give attention to a larger collection of pictures.

The more the number of artists increases, the more exacting should the jury of selection become. All was lost as soon as the Salon encroached further on the gallery. The Salon should have been kept within fixed and restricted limits, inflexibly defined, where each class might exhibit its best works. The experience of ten years has proved the excellence of the old rules. Instead of a tourney, you now have a riot; instead of a glorious exhibition, you have a medley bazaar; instead of a selection, you have everything at once. What is the result? A great artist is swamped. The *Turkish Café*, the *Children at the Well*, the *Torture by Hooks*, and the *Joseph* by Decamps would have done more for his glory if exhibited all four, in the great room with the hundred other good pictures of the year, than his twenty canvases buried among three thousand paintings, and dispersed among six galleries.

With strange perversity, since the doors have been thrown open to all, there has been much talk of unappreciated genius. When, twelve years before, the *Courtesan*, by Ingres, and Sigalon's pictures, Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, Delacroix's *Massacre of Scio*, and Eugène Deveria's *Baptism of Henri IV.*—accepted, as they were, by yet more famous men, who were taxed with jealousy—revealed to the world, notwithstanding the carping of critics, the existence of youthful and ardent painters, not a complaint was ever heard. But now, when the veriest dauber of canvas can display his works, we hear of nothing but misunderstood talent. Where there is no longer any judgment, nothing is judged. Our artists, do what they may, will come back to the ordeal of selection which recommends their work to the admiration of the public for whom they toil. Without the choice exercised by the Academy, there will be no Salon; and without the Salon, art may perish.

Since the catalogue has grown to be a fat volume, many names are found there which remain obscure, notwithstanding the list of ten or twelve pictures that follows them.

Among these names, the least known of all perhaps is that of an artist named Pierre Grassou, a native of Fougères, and called, for shortness, Fougères in the artist world—a name which nowadays fills so much space on the page, and which has suggested the bitter reflections introducing this sketch of his life, and applicable to some other members of the artist tribe.

In 1832 Fougères was living in the Rue de Navarin, on the fourth floor of one of those tall, narrow houses that are like the obelisk of Luxor, which have a passage and a dark, narrow staircase with dangerous turnings, which are not wide enough for more than three windows on each floor, and have a courtyard, or, to be exact, a square well at the back. Above the three or four rooms inhabited by Fougères was his studio, looking out over Montmartre. The studio, painted brick red; the floor, carefully stained brown and polished; each chair provided with a square, bordered mat; the sofa, plain enough, but as clean as that in a tradeswoman's bedroom, everything betrayed the petty existence of a narrow mind and the carefulness of a poor man. There was a closet for keeping the studio properties in, a breakfast table, a sideboard, a desk, and the various objects necessary for painting, all clean and in order. The stove, too, had the benefit of this Dutch neatness, which was all the more conspicuous because the pure and steady northern sky flooded the back room with clear, cold light. Fougères, a mere painter of *genre,* had no need for the huge machinery which ruins historical painters; he had never discerned in himself faculties competent to venture on the higher walks of art, and was still content with small easels.

In the beginning of the month of December of that year, the season when Paris Philistines are periodically attacked by the burlesque idea of perpetuating their faces—in themselves a sufficient burden—Pierre Grassou, having risen early, was setting his palette, lighting his stove, eating a roll soaked in milk, and waiting to work till his window panes should have thawed enough to let daylight in. The weather was dry

and fine. At this instant, the painter, eating with the patient, resigned look that tells so much, recognized the footfall of a man who had had the influence over his life which people of his class have in the career of most artists—Elias Magus, a picture dealer, an usurer in canvas. And, in fact, Elias Magus came in, at the moment when the painter was about to begin work in his elaborately clean studio.

"How is yourself, old rascal?" said the painter.

Fougères had won the Cross; Elias bought his pictures for two or three hundred francs, and gave himself the most artistic airs.

"Business is bad," replied Elias. "You all are such lords; you talk of two hundred francs as soon as you have six sous worth of paint on the canvas.—But you are a very good fellow, you are. You are a man of method, and I have come to bring you a good job."

"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes," said Fougères. "Do you know Latin?"

"No."

"Well, that means that the Greeks did not offer a bit of good business to the Trojans without making something out of it. In those days they used to say, 'Take my horse.' Nowadays we say, 'Take my trash!'—Well, what do you want, Ulysses-Lagningeole-Elias-Magus?"

This speech shows the degree of sweetness and wit which Fougères could put into what painters call studio-chaff.

"I don't say that you will not have to paint me two pictures for nothing."

"Oh! oh!"

"I leave it to you; I do not ask for them. You are an honest artist."

"Indeed?"

"Well. I am bringing you a father, a mother, and an only daughter."

"All unique specimens?"

"My word, yes, indeed!—to have their portraits painted. The worthy folks, crazy about art, have never dared venture

into a studio. The daughter will have a hundred thousand francs on her marriage. You may do well to paint such people. Family portraits for yourself, who knows?"

The old German image, who passes muster as a man, and is called Elias Magus, broke off to laugh a dry cackle that horrified the painter. He felt as if he had heard Mephistopheles talking of marriage.

"The portraits are to be five hundred francs apiece; you may give me three pictures."

"Right you are!" said Fougères cheerfully.

"And if you marry the daughter, you will not forget me——"

"Marry? I!" cried Pierre Grassou; "I, who am used to have a bed to myself, to get up early, whose life is all laid out——"

"A hundred thousand francs," said Magus, "and a sweet girl, full of golden lights like a Titian!"

"And what position do these people hold?"

"Retired merchants: in love with the arts at the present moment; they have a country house at Ville-d'Avray, and ten or twelve thousand francs a year."

"What was their business?"

"Bottles."

"Don't speak that word; I fancy I hear corks being cut, and it sets my teeth on edge."

"Well; am I to bring them?"

"Three portraits; I will send them to the Salon; I might go in for portrait-painting.—All right, yes."

And old Elias went downstairs to fetch the Vervelle family.

To understand exactly what the outcome of such a proposal would be on the painter, and the effect produced on him by Monsieur and Madame Vervelle, graced by the addition of their only daughter, it is necessary to glance for a moment at the past life of Pierre Grassou of Fougères. As a pupil, he had learned to draw of Servin, who was regarded in the academical world as a great draughtsman. He afterwards worked under Schinner, to discover the secrets

of the powerful and splendid coloring that characterizes that master. The master and his disciples had kept the secrets; Pierre had discovered nothing. From thence Fougères had gone to Sommervieux's studio to familiarize himself with that part of art which is called composition; but composition was shy and held aloof from him. Then he had tried to steal from Granet and Drolling the mystery of their luminous interiors; the two masters had not allowed him to rob them. Finally, Fougères had finished his training under Duval-Lecamus.

Through all these studies and various transformations, Fougères' quiet, steady habits had furnished materials for mockery in every studio where he had worked; but he everywhere disarmed his comrades by his diffidence and his lamb-like patience and meekness. The masters had no sympathy with this worthy lad; masters like brilliant fellows, eccentric spirits, farcical and fiery, or gloomy and deeply meditative, promising future talent. Everything in Fougères proclaimed mediocrity. His nickname of Fougères—the name of the painter in the play by *Fabre d'Eglantine*—was the pretext for endless affronts, but by force of circumstances he was saddled with the name of the town "where he first saw the light."

Grassou de Fougères matched his name. Plump and rather short, he had a dull complexion, brown eyes, black hair, a thick prominent nose, a rather wide mouth, and long ears. His placid, gentle, resigned expression did little to improve these features of a face that was full of health but not of movement. He could never suffer from the flow of blood, the vehemence of thought, or the spirit of comedy by which a great artist is to be known. This youth, born to be a virtuous citizen, had come from his provincial home to serve as shop clerk to a color-man, a native of Mayenne, distantly related to the d'Orgemonts, and he had made himself a painter by the sheer obstinacy which is the backbone of the Breton character. What he had endured, and the way in which he lived during his period of study, God alone knows.

He suffered as much as great men suffer when they are haunted by want, and hunted down like wild beasts by the pack of inferior souls, and the whole army of vanity thirsting for revenge.

As soon as he thought himself strong enough for flight on his own wings, he took a studio at the top of the Rue des Martyrs, and there he began to work. He first sent in a picture in 1819. The picture he offered the jury for their exhibition at the Louvre represented a Village Wedding, a laborious imitation of Greuze's picture. It was refused. When Fougères heard the fatal sentence, he did not fly into those furies or fits of epileptic vanity to which proud spirits are liable, and which sometimes end in a challenge sent to the President or the Secretary, or in threats of assassination. Fougères calmly received his picture back, wrapped it in a handkerchief, and brought it home to his studio swearing that he would yet become a great painter.

He placed the canvas on the easel and went to call on his old master, a man of immense talent—Schinner—a gentle and patient artist, whose success had been brilliant in the last Salon. He begged him to come and criticise the rejected work. The great painter left everything and went. When poor Fougères had placed him in front of the painting, Schinner at the first glance took Fougères by the hand:

"You are a capital good fellow; you have a heart of gold, it will not be fair to deceive you. Listen; you have kept all the promise you showed at the studio. When a man has such stuff as that at the end of his brush, my good fellow, he had better leave his paints in Brullon's shop, and not deprive others of the canvas. Get home early, pull on your cotton night-cap, be in bed by nine; and to-morrow morning at ten o'clock go to some office and ask for work, and have done with art."

"My good friend," said Fougères, "my picture is condemned already. It is not a verdict that I want, but the reasons for it."

"Well, then, your tone is gray and cold; you see nature

through a crape veil; your drawing is heavy and clumsy; your composition is borrowed from Greuze, who only redeemed his faults by qualities which you have not."

As he pointed out the faults of the picture, Schinner saw in Fougères' face so deep an expression of grief that he took him away to dine, and tried to comfort him.

Next day, by seven in the morning, Fougères, before his easel, was working over the condemned canvas; he warmed up the color, made the corrections suggested by Schinner, and touched up the figures. Then, sick of such patching, he took it to Elias Magus. Elias Magus, being a sort of Dutch-Belgian-Fleming, had three reasons for being what he was—miserly and rich. He had lately come from Bordeaux, and was starting in business in Paris as a picture-dealer; he lived on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle. Fougères, who trusted to his palette to take him to the baker's, bravely ate bread and walnuts, or bread and milk, or bread and cherries, or bread and cheese, according to the season. Elias Magus, to whom Pierre offered his first picture, eyed it for a long time, and then gave him fifteen francs.

"Taking fifteen francs a year and spending a thousand, I shall go fast and far," said Fougères, smiling.

Elias Magus gave a shrug and bit his thumb at the thought that he might have had the picture for five francs. Every morning, for some days, Fougères went down to the Rue des Martyrs, lost himself in the crowd in the boulevard opposite Magus' shop, and fixed his eyes on his picture—which did not attract the gaze of the passers-by. Towards the end of the week the picture disappeared. Fougères wandered up the boulevard towards the picture-dealer's shop with an affectation of amusing himself. The Jew was standing in the doorway.

"Well, you have sold my picture?"

"There it is," said Magus. "I am having it framed to show to some man who fancies himself knowing in paintings."

Fougères did not dare to come along the boulevard any more. He began a new picture; for two months he labored

at it, feeding like a mouse and working like a galley-slave. One evening he walked out on the boulevard; his feet carried him involuntarily to Magus' shop; he could nowhere see his picture.

"I have sold your picture," said the dealer to the artist.

"For how much?"

"I got my money back with a little interest. Paint me some Flemish interiors, an Anatomy lecture, a landscape; I will take them of you," said Elias.

Fougères could have hugged Magus in his arms; he looked upon him as a father. He went home with joy in his heart. Then Schinner, the great Schinner, was mistaken! In that vast city of Paris there were some hearts that beat in unison with that of Grassou; his talent was discerned and appreciated!

The poor fellow, at seven-and-twenty, had the artlessness of a boy of sixteen. Any one else, one of your distrustful, suspicious artists, would have noticed Elias' diabolical expression, have seen the quiver of his beard, the ironical curl of his moustache, the action of his shoulders, all betraying the satisfaction of Walter Scott's Jew cheating a Christian. Fougères paraded the boulevards with a joy that gave his face an expression of pride. He looked like a schoolboy protecting a woman. He met Joseph Bridau, one of his fellow-students, one of those eccentric men of genius who are predestined to glory and disaster. Joseph Bridau, having a few sous in his pocket, as he expressed it, took Fougères to the opera. Fougères did not see the ballet, did not hear the music; he was imagining pictures, he was painting.

He left Joseph half-way through the evening, and ran home to make sketches by lamplight; he invented thirty pictures, full of reminiscences, and believed himself a genius. Next day he bought some colors and canvases of various sizes; he spread out some bread and some cheese on his table; he got some water in a jug, and a store of wood for his stove; then, to use the studio phrase, he pegged away at his painting; he employed a few models, and Magus lent him

draperies. After two months of seclusion, the Breton had finished four pictures. He again asked Schinner's advice, with the addition of Joseph Bridau's. The two painters found these works to be a servile imitation of Dutch landscapes, of Metzu's interiors, and the fourth was a version of Rembrandt's *Anatomy lecture*.

"Always imitations!" said Schinner. "Ah! Fougères would find it hard to be original."

"You ought to turn your attention to something else than painting," said Bridau.

"To what?" said Fougères.

"Go in for literature."

Fougères bent his head as sheep do before rain. Then he asked and got some practical advice, touched up his paintings, and carried them to Elias. Elias gave him twenty-five francs for each. At this price Fougères made nothing, but, thanks to his abstemiousness, he lost nothing. He took some walks to see what became of his pictures, and had a singular hallucination. His works, so firmly painted, so neat, as hard as tin-plate iron, and as shining as painting on porcelain, seemed to be covered with a fog; they looked quite like old masters.

Elias had just gone out; Fougères could obtain no information as to this phenomenon. He thought his eyes deceived him.

The painter went home to his studio to make new old masters. After seven years of constant work, Fougères was able to compose and paint fairly good pictures. He did as well as all the other artists of the second class. Elias bought and sold all the poor Breton's pictures, while he laboriously earned a hundred louis a year, and did not spend more than twelve hundred francs.

At the Exhibition of 1829, Léon de Lora, Schinner, and Bridau, who all three filled a large space, and were at the head of the new movement in art, took pity on their old comrade's perseverance and poverty; they managed to get a picture by Fougères accepted and hung in the great room.

This work, of thrilling interest, recalling Vigneron in its sentiment, and Dubufe's early manner in its execution, represented a young man in prison having the back of his head shaved. On one side stood a priest, on the other a young woman in tears. A lawyer's clerk was reading an official document. On a wretched table stood a meal which no one had eaten. The light came in through the bars of a high window. It was enough to make the good folks shudder, and they shuddered.

Fougères had borrowed directly from Gerard Dow's masterpiece: he had turned the group of the *Dropsical Woman* towards the window instead of facing the spectator. He had put the condemned prisoner in the place of the dying woman—the same pallor, the same look, the same appeal to heaven. Instead of the Dutch physician, there was the rigid official figure of the clerk dressed in black; but he had added an old woman by the side of Gerard Dow's young girl. The cruelly good-humored face of the executioner crowned the group. The plagiarism, skilfully concealed, was not recognized.

The catalogue contained these words:—

510, GRASSOU DE FOUGÈRES (PIERRE), Rue de Navarin, 2.
The Chouan's Toilet; condemned to Death, 1809.

Though quite mediocre, the picture had a prodigious success, for it reminded the spectators of the affair of the robbers—known as the *Chauffeurs*—of Mortagne. A crowd collected every day in front of the picture, which became the fashion, and Charles X. stopped to look at it. Madame, having heard of the poor Breton's patient life, grew enthusiastic about him. The Duc d'Orleans asked the price of the painting. The priests told Madame the Dauphiness that the work was full of pious feeling; it had no doubt a very satisfactory suggestion of religion. Monseigneur the Dauphin admired the dust on the window panes, a stupid, dull mistake, for what Fougères had intended was a greenish tone,

which spoke of damp at the bottom of the walls. Madame bought the picture for a thousand francs, and the Dauphin gave a commission for another. Charles X. bestowed the Cross on this son of a peasant who had fought for the Royal Cause in 1799; Joseph Bridau, a great painter, was not decorated. The Minister of the Interior ordered two sacred pictures for the church at Fougères. This Salon was to Pierre Grassou fortune, glory, a future, and life.

To invent in any kind is to die by inches; to copy is to live. Having at last discovered a vein full of gold, Grassou of Fougères practised that part of this barbarous maxim to which the world owes the atrocious mediocrity whose duty it is to elect its superiors in every class of society, but which naturally elects itself, and wages pitiless war against all real talent. The principle of election universally applied is a bad one; France will get over it. At the same time, Fougères was so gentle and kind that his modesty, his simplicity, and his astonishment silenced recriminations and envy. Then, again, he had on his side all the successful Grassous, representing all the Grassous to come. Some people, touched by the energy of a man whom nothing had discouraged, spoke of Domenichino, and said, "Hard work in the arts must be rewarded. Grassou has earned his success. He has been pegging at it for ten years, poor old fellow!"

This exclamation, "poor old fellow!" counted for a great deal in the support and congratulations the painter received. Pity elevates as many second-rate talents as envy runs down great artists. The newspapers had not been sparing of criticism, but the Chevalier Fougères took it all as he took his friend's advice, with angelic patience. Rich now, with fifteen thousand francs very hardly earned, he furnished his rooms and his studio in the Rue de Navarin, he painted the picture ordered by Monseigneur the Dauphin, and the two sacred works commanded by the Minister, finishing them to the day, with a punctuality perfectly distracting to the cashier of the Ministry, accustomed to quite other ways. But note the good luck of methodical people! If he had delayed,

Grassou, overtaken by the revolution of July, would never have been paid.

By the time he was seven-and-thirty Fougères had manufactured for Elias Magus about two hundred pictures, all perfectly unknown, but by which he had gained with practice that satisfactory handling, that pitch of dexterity at which an artist shrugs his shoulders, and which is dear to the Philistine. Fougères was loved by his friends for his rectitude of mind and steadfastness of feeling, for his perfectly obliging temper and loyal spirit; though they had no respect for his palette, they were attached to the man who held it.

"What a pity that Fougères should indulge in the vice of painting!" his friends would say.

Grassou, however, could give sound advice, like the newspaper writers, who are incapable of producing a book, but who know full well where a book is faulty. But there was a difference between Fougères and these literary critics; he was keenly alive to every beauty, he acknowledged it, and his advice was stamped with a sense of justice which made his strictures acceptable.

After the revolution of July Fougères sent in ten or more paintings to every exhibition, of which the jury would accept four or five. He lived with the strictest economy, and his whole household consisted of a woman to manage the housework. His amusements lay solely in visits to his friends, and in going to see works of art; he treated himself to some little tours in France, and dreamed of seeing inspiration in Switzerland. This wretched artist was a good citizen; he served in the Guard, turned out for inspection, and paid his rent and bills with the vulgarest punctuality. Having lived in hard work and penury, he had never had time to be in love. A bachelor and poor, up to the present day he had had no wish to complicate his simple existence.

Having no idea of any way of increasing his wealth, he took his savings and his earnings every quarter to his notary, Cardot. When the notary had a thousand crowns in hand,

he invested them in a first mortgage, with substitution in favor of the wife's rights if the borrower should marry, or in favor of the seller if the borrower should wish to pay it off. The notary drew the interest and added it to the sums deposited by Grassou de Fougères. The painter looked forward to the happy day when his investments should reach the imposing figure of two thousand francs a year, when he would indulge in the *otium cum dignitate* of an artist and paint pictures—oh! but such pictures! Real pictures, finished pictures—something like, clipping, stunning! His fondest hope, his dream of joy, the climax of all his hopes—would you like to know it? It was to be elected to the Institute and wear the rosette of the officers of the Legion of Honor! To sit by Schinner and Léon de Lora! To get into the Academy before Bridau! To have a rosette in his button-hole.—What a vision! Only your commonplace mind can think of everything.

On hearing several footsteps on the stairs, Fougères pushed his fingers through his top-knot of hair, buttoned his bottle-green waistcoat, and was not a little surprised at the entrance of a face of the kind known in the studio as a *melon*. This fruit was perched on a pumpkin dressed in blue cloth, and graced with a dangling bunch of jingling seals. The melon snorted like a porpoise, the pumpkin walked on turnips incorrectly called legs. A real artist would at once have sketched such a caricature of the bottle merchant and then have shown him out, saying that he did not paint vegetables. Fougères looked at his customer without laughing, for M. Vervelle wore in his shirt-front a diamond worth a thousand crowns. Fougères glanced at Magus, and said in the studio slang of the day, "A fat job," meaning that the worthy was rich.

M. Vervelle heard it and frowned. He brought in his train some other vegetable combinations in the persons of his wife and daughter. The wife had in her face a fine mahogany tone; she looked like a cocoanut surmounted by a head and

tightened in with a belt; she twirled round on her feet; her dress was yellow, with black stripes. She proudly displayed absurd mittens on a pair of hands as swollen as a glover's sign. The feathers of a first-class funeral waved over a coal-scuttle bonnet; lace frills covered a figure as round behind as before, thus the spherical form of the cocoanut was perfect. Her feet, which a painter would have termed hoofs, had a garnish of half-an-inch of fat projecting beyond her patent-leather shoes. How had her feet been got into the shoes? Who can tell?

Behind her came a young asparagus shoot, green and yellow as to her dress, with a small head covered with hair in flat braids of a carroty yellow which a Roman would have adored, thread-paper arms, a fairly white but freckled skin, large innocent eyes, with colorless lashes and faintly marked eyebrows, a Leghorn straw hat, trimmed with a couple of honest white satin bows, and bound with white satin, virtuously red hands, and feet like her mother's.

These three persons, as they looked round the studio, had a look of beatitude which showed a highly-respectable enthusiasm for art.

"And it is you, sir, who are going to take our likenesses?" said the father, assuming a little dashing air.

"Yes, sir," replied Grassou.

"Vervelle, he has the Cross," said the wife to her husband in a whisper while the painter's back was turned.

"Should I have our portraits painted by an artist who was not 'decorated'?" retorted the bottle-merchant.

Elias Magus bowed to the Vervelle family and went away. Grassou followed him on to the landing.

"Who but you would have discovered such a set of phizzes?"

"A hundred thousand francs in settlement!"

"Yes, but what a family!"

"And three hundred thousand francs in expectations, a house in the Rue Boucherat, and a country place at Ville d'Avray."

"Boucherat, bottles, bumpkins, and bounce!" said the painter.

"You will be out of want for the rest of your days," said Elias.

This idea flashed into Pierre Grassou's brain as the morning light had broken on his attic. As he placed the young lady's father in position, he thought him really good-looking, and admired his face with its strong purple tones. The mother and daughter hovered round the painter, wondering at all his preparations; to them he seemed a god. This visible adoration was pleasing to Fougères. The golden calf cast its fantastic reflection on this family.

"You must earn enormous sums; but you spend it as fast as you get it?" said the mother.

"No, madame," replied the painter, "I do not spend. I have not means to amuse myself. My notary invests my money; he knows what I have, and when once the money is in his hands I think no more about it."

"And I have always been told that painters were a thriftless set!" said father Vervelle.

"Who is your notary, if it is not too great a liberty?" said Madame Vervelle.

"A capital fellow all round—Cardot."

"Lord! lord! Isn't that funny now!" said Vervelle. "Why, Cardot is ours too."

"Do not move," said the painter.

"Sit still, do, Anténor," said his wife; "you will put the gentleman out; if you could see him working you would understand."

"Gracious me, why did you never have me taught art?" said Mademoiselle Vervelle to her parents.

"Virginie!" exclaimed her mother, "there are certain things a young lady cannot learn. When you are married—well and good. Till then be content."

In the course of this first sitting the Vervelle family became almost intimate with the worthy artist. They were to come again two days after. After they left, the father and

mother desired Virginie to go first; but in spite of the distance between them, she heard these words, of which the meaning must have roused her curiosity:

"*Décoré*—thirty-seven—an artist who gets commissions, and places his money in our notary's hands. We will consult Cardot. Madame de Fougères, heh! not a bad name! He does not look like a bad fellow! A man of business, you would say? But so long as a merchant has not retired from business, you can never tell what your daughter may come to; while an artist who saves.—And then we are fond of art. —Well, well!——"

While the Vervelles were discussing him, Pierre Grassou was thinking of the Vervelles. He found it impossible to remain quietly in his studio; he walked up and down the boulevard, looking at every red-haired woman who went by! He argued with himself in the strangest way: Gold was the most splendid of the metals, yellow stood for gold; the ancient Romans liked red-haired women, and he became a Roman, and so forth. After being married two years, what does a man care for his wife's complexion? Beauty fades—but ugliness remains! Money is half of happiness. That evening, when he went to bed, the painter had already persuaded himself that Virginie Vervelle was charming.

When the trio walked in on the day fixed for the second sitting, the artist received them with an amiable smile. The rogue had shaved, had put on a clean white shirt; he had chosen a becoming pair of trousers, and red slippers with Turkish toes. The family responded with a smile as flattering as the artist's; Virginie turned as red as her hair, dropped her eyes, and turned away her head, looking at the studies. Pierre Grassou thought these little affectations quite bewitching. Virginie was graceful; happily, she was like neither father nor mother. But whom was she like?

"Ah, I see," said he to himself; "the mother has had an eye to business."

During the sitting there was a war of wits between the family and the painter, who was so audacious as to say that

father Vervelle was witty. After this piece of flattery the family took possession of the painter's heart in double-quick time; he gave one of his drawings to Virginie, and a sketch to her mother.

"For nothing?" they asked.

Pierre Grassou could not help smiling.

"You must not give your works away like this; they are money," said Vervelle.

At the third sitting old Vervelle spoke of a fine collection of pictures he had in his country house at Ville d'Avray—Rubens, Gerard Dow, Mieris, Terburg, Rembrandt, a Titian, Paul Potter, etc.

"M. Vervelle has been frightfully extravagant," said Madame Vervelle pompously. "He has a hundred thousand francs' worth of pictures."

"I am fond of the arts," said the bottle-merchant.

When Madame Vervelle's portrait was begun, that of her husband was nearly finished. The enthusiasm of the family now knew no bounds. The notary had praised the artist in the highest terms. Pierre Grassou was in his opinion the best fellow on earth, one of the steadiest of artists, who had indeed saved thirty-six thousand francs; his days of poverty were past; he was making ten thousand francs a year, he was reinvesting his interest, and he was incapable of making a woman unhappy. This last sentence was of great weight in the scale. The friends of the family heard nothing talked of but the celebrated Fougères.

By the time Fougères began the portrait of Virginie he was already the son-in-law elect of the Vervelle couple. The trio expanded in this studio, which they had begun to regard as a home; there was an inexplicable attraction to them in this cleaned, cared-for, neat, artistic spot. *Abyssus abyssum,* like to like.

Towards the end of the sitting the stairs were shaken, the door was flung open, and in came Joseph Bridau; he rode the whirlwind, his hair was flying; in he came with his broad, deeply-seamed face, shot lightning glances all round the

room, and came suddenly up to Grassou, pulling his coat across the gastric region, and trying to button it, but in vain, for the button mold had escaped from its cloth cover.

"Times are bad," he said to Grassou.

"Hah?"

"The duns are at my heels.—Hallo! are you painting that sort of thing?"

"Hold your tongue!"

"To be sure——"

The Vervelle family, excessively taken aback by this apparition, turned from the usual red to the cherry scarlet of a fierce fire.

"It pays," said Joseph. "Have you any shot in your locker?"

"Do you want much?"

"A five hundred franc note. . . . There is a party after me of the bloodhound kind, who, when once they have set their teeth, do not let go without having the piece out. What a set!"

"I will give you a line to my notary——"

"What! have you a notary?"

"Yes."

"Then that accounts for your still painting cheeks rose-pink, only fit for a hair-dresser's doll!"

Grassou could not help reddening, for Virginie was sitting to him.

"Paint nature as it is," the great painter went on. "Mademoiselle is red-haired. Well, is that a deadly sin? Everything is fine in painting. Squeeze me out some cinnabar, warm up those cheeks, give me those little brown freckles, butter your canvas boldly! Do you want to do better than Nature?"

"Here," said Fougères, "take my place while I write."

Vervelle waddled to the writing-table and spoke in Grassou's ear.

"That interfering muddler will spoil it," said the bottle-merchant.

"If he would paint your Virginie's portrait, it would be worth a thousand of mine," replied Fougères indignantly.

On hearing this, the goodman quietly beat a retreat to join his wife, who sat bewildered at the invasion of this wild beast, and not at all happy at seeing him co-operating in her daughter's portrait.

"There, carry out those hints," said Bridau, returning the palette, and taking the note. "I will not thank you.—I can get back to D'Arthez's château; I am painting a dining-room for him, and Léon de Lora is doing panels over the doors—masterpieces. Come and see us!"

He went off without bowing even, so sick was he of looking at Virginie.

"Who is that man?" asked Madame Vervelle.

"A great artist," replied Grassou.

There was a moment's silence.

"Are you quite sure," said Virginie, "that he has brought no ill-luck to my portrait? . . . He frightened me."

"He has only improved it," said Grassou.

"If he is a great artist, I prefer a great artist like you," said Madame Vervelle.

"Oh, mamma, Monsieur Fougères is a much greater artist. He will take me full length," remarked Virginie.

The eccentricities of genius had soared these steadygoing Philistines.

The year had now reached that pleasant autumn season prettily called Saint-Martin's summer. It was with the shyness of a neophyte in the presence of a man of genius that Vervelle ventured to invite Grassou to spend the following Sunday at his country house. He knew how little attraction a *bourgeois* family could offer to an artist.

"You artists," said he, "must have excitement, fine scenes, and clever company. But I can give you some good wine, and I rely on my pictures to make up for the dulness an artist like you must feel among tradesfolks."

This worship, which greatly soothed his vanity, delighted poor Pierre Grassou, who was little used to such compliments.

This worthy artist, this ignominious mediocrity, this heart of gold, this loyal soul, this blundering draughtsman, this best of good fellows, displaying the Cross of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honor, got himself up with care to go and enjoy the last fine days of the year at Ville d'Avray. The painter arrived unpretentiously by the public conveyance, and could not help admiring the bottle-merchant's handsome residence placed in the midst of a park of about five acres, at the top of the hill, and the best point of view. To marry Virginie meant owning this fine house some day!

He was received by the Vervelles with an enthusiasm, a delight, a genuine heartiness, a simple, commonplace stupidity that overpowered him. It was a day of triumph. The future son-in-law was taken to walk along the nankeen-colored paths, which had been raked, as was due, for a great man. The very trees looked as if they had been brushed and combed, the lawns were mown. The pure country air diluted kitchen odors of the most comforting character. Everything in the house proclaimed, "We have a great artist here!" Little father Vervelle rolled about his paddock like an apple, the daughter wriggled after him like an eel, and the mother followed with great dignity. For seven hours these three beings never released Grassou.

After a dinner, of which the length matched the splendor, Monsieur and Madame Vervelle came to their grand surprise—the opening of the picture gallery, lighted up by lamps carefully arranged for effect. Three neighbors, all retired business men, an uncle from whom they had expectations, invited in honor of the great artist, an old Aunt Vervelle, and the other guests followed Grassou into the gallery, all curious to hear his opinion of little Daddy Vervelle's famous collection, for he overpowered them by the fabulous value of his pictures. The bottle-merchant seemed to wish to vie with King Louis-Philippe and the galleries of Versailles.

The pictures, splendidly framed, bore tickets, on which might be read in black letters on a gold label:—

RUBENS

A Dance of Fauns and Nymphs

REMBRANDT

Interior of a Dissecting-room

Doctor Tromp giving a Lesson to his Pupils

There were a hundred and fifty pictures, all varnished and dusted; a few had green curtains over them, not to be raised in the presence of the young person.

The artist stood with limp arms and a gaping mouth, without a word on his lips, as he recognized in this gallery half his own works; he, He was Rubens, Paul Potter, Mieris, Metzu, Gerard Dow! He alone was twenty great masters!

"What is the matter? you look pale."

"Daughter, a glass of water!" cried Madame Vervelle.

The painter took the old man by the button of his coat and led him into a corner, under pretence of examining a Murillo.—Spanish pictures were then the fashion.

"You bought your pictures of Elias Magus?" said he.

"Yes. All original works."

"Between ourselves, what did he make you pay for those I will point out to you?"

The couple went round the gallery. The guests were amazed at the solemnity with which the artist, following his host, examined all these masterpieces.

"Three thousand francs!" exclaimed Vervelle in an undertone, as he came to the last. "But I tell you forty thousand francs!"

"Forty thousand francs for a Titian!" said the artist aloud; "why, it is dirt-cheap!"

"When I told you I had a hundred thousand crowns' worth of pictures——" exclaimed Vervelle.

"I painted every one of those pictures," said Pierre Gras-

sou in his ear; "and I did not get more than ten thousand francs for the whole lot."

"Prove it," replied the bottle-merchant, "and I will double my daughter's settlements; for in that case you are Rubens, Rembrandt, Terburg, Titian!"

"And Magus is something like a picture-dealer!" added the painter, who could account for the antique look of the pictures, and the practical end of the subjects ordered by the dealer.

Far from falling in his admirer's estimation, M. de Fougères—for so the family insisted on calling Pierre Grassou—rose so high that he painted his family for nothing, and of course presented the portraits to his father-in-law, his mother-in-law, and his wife.

Pierre Grassou, who never misses a single exhibition, is now regarded in the Philistine world as a very good portrait-painter. He earns about twelve thousand francs a year, and spoils about five hundred francs' worth of canvas. His wife had six thousand francs a year on her marriage, and they live with her parents. The Vervelles and the Grassous, who get on perfectly well together, keep a carriage, and are the happiest people on earth. Pierre Grassou moves in a commonplace circle, where he is considered one of the greatest artists of the period. Not a family portrait is ordered between the Barrière du Trône and the Rue du Temple that is not the work of this great painter, or that costs less than five hundred francs. The great reason why the townsfolk employ this artist is this: "Say what you like, he invests twenty thousand francs a year through his notary."

As Grassou behaved very well in the riots of the 12th of May, he has been promoted to be an officer of the Legion of Honor. He is major in the National Guard. The Versailles gallery was bound to order a battle scene of so worthy a citizen, who forthwith walked all about Paris to meet his old comrades and to say with an air of indifference, "The King has ordered me to paint a battle!"

Madame de Fougères adores her husband, whom she has presented with two children. The painter, however, a good father and a good husband, cannot altogether get rid of a haunting thought: other painters make fun of him; his name is a term of contempt in every studio; the newspapers never notice his works. Still, he works on, and is making his way to the Academy; he will be admitted. And then—a revenge that swells his heart with pride—he buys pictures by famous artists when they are in difficulties, and he is replacing the daubs at the Ville d'Avray by real masterpieces—not of his own painting.

There are mediocrities more vexatious and more spiteful than that of Pierre Grassou, who is in fact anonymously benevolent and perfectly obliging.

PARIS, *December* 1839.